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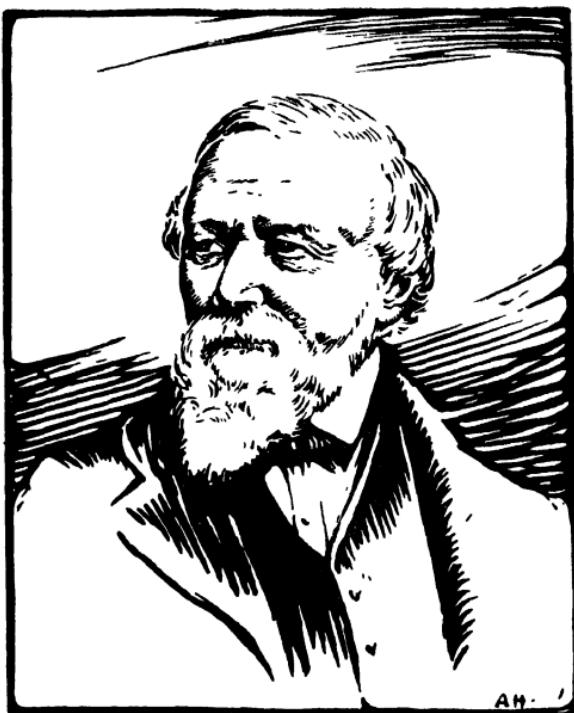
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SELECTIONS FROM BROWNING



SELECTIONS FROM THE POEMS OF
Browning

Edited with Introduction and Notes
by
H. A. NEEDHAM

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PREFACE

THE aim of this volume is to give, within the limits of some two hundred pages, a representative selection of Browning's poems.

The text of the songs selected from *Paracelsus* and *Pippa Passes*, and of the poems included under the titles *Dramatic Lyrics*, *Dramatic Romances*, *Men and Women*, and *Dramatis Personæ*, is taken from the collected edition of 1868 ; and the poems are arranged in the groups and in the order in which they appear in this and the other collected editions. As Browning's grouping of the poems in these editions differs from that of the volumes as they were originally published, the date of the first publication of each poem is appended to its title in the Notes.

The dedication from *The Ring and the Book* is taken from the first edition of 1868, and with the exception of the Epilogue from *Asolando*, which was first published in December 1889, the selections from the later volumes are based on the edition of 1888-89.

The Introduction which follows attempts to give a general view of the poet's life and work and of the nature of his thought and artistry : fuller information on many of the points touched on is given in the notes to individual poems. To meet the wishes of many teachers a page of questions has been included ; these are not intended to be more than general suggestions.

The detailed explanation and interpretation of the poems, which was begun in Mrs Orr's *Handbook* and Berdoe's *Browning Cyclopædia*, has been carried further by many later editors and critics, among whom special mention should be

made of W. T. Young, W. C. De Vane, and A. K. Cook. To their work, and to other studies listed in the Bibliography on page 251, the present editor acknowledges his indebtedness.

The *Life* of the poet by W. H. Griffin and H. C. Minchin is recognised as the most authoritative, and includes the most complete account of the way in which various poems are related to Browning's studies and to the events and circumstances of his life. In recent years, however, the availability of further letters and memoirs of the period has thrown new light on Browning's personality and family background and also on his married life in Italy ; and the author of *House* has not remained free from psychoanalytical probings. The results of such research are presented in an interesting way in Betty Miller's *Robert Browning, A Portrait* (London, John Murray, 1952), but her picture of the poet should be viewed in the light of earlier well-established knowledge.

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INTRODUCTION

I. LIFE OF BROWNING

ROBERT BROWNING was born in Camberwell, London, on May 7th, 1812. His father, Robert Browning, was for fifty years a clerk in the Bank of England, but this profession was little to his liking ; he was a man of strong constitution (he died in 1866 at the age of eighty-four) and of marked literary ability and artistic taste. These qualities of body and mind were inherited by his son. The poet's mother was the daughter of William Wiedmann, a Dundee shipowner of German and Scottish parentage : she was a gentle, religious-minded woman of nervous temperament, and, in Carlyle's phrase, " the true type of a Scottish gentlewoman." From her Browning derived, no doubt, his nervous irritability, his love of music and his affection for the animal world.

As a child, Browning was "handsome, vigorous, fearless . . . and soon developed an unresting activity and a fiery temper" (Orr). He became a ready pupil, and whilst at his first school employed his leisure in writing dramatic pieces which his schoolfellows performed. He also read widely at home, especially in the literature of the eighteenth century ; and gained an early knowledge of painting, by frequent and prolonged visits to the Dulwich Gallery. Among the poets his favourite was Byron, and a collection of poems called *Incondita* (largely imitative of Byron) was written when he was only twelve years of age. Shelley and Keats were his next discoveries, and Shelley soon usurped the place of Byron in his affections.

In 1826 Browning was placed for two years under a French tutor, and then at the age of seventeen went to University College, London, for the study of Greek. He was energetic, even aggressive, in all his pursuits—language, literature, music, dancing, riding, boxing, fencing ; and, whilst outwardly accepting the Nonconformist faith and social outlook of his home, was inwardly exploring the problems of life along his own lines. The idealism of Shelley undoubtedly exerted a great influence upon his mind and thought in this period of doubt and conflict, and this is to some extent proved by the obvious debt to Shelley in Browning's first published poem, *Pauline* (1833).

Pauline was published anonymously, and Browning later spoke of it as "the crab to his tree of life," regarding it as a crude and immature production, and destroying as many copies as he could lay hands on. Nevertheless the work was significant both in itself and in the date of its appearance. For the year 1833 saw also the publication of Tennyson's second volume of poems, of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, and of Dickens's *Sketches by Boz*. The Victorian Age was clearly launched.

Thanks to the generosity and wisdom of his father, Browning was not shackled with the task of taking up any profession in which he was not interested, and by 1833 he seems to have decided definitely to give his life to poetry. In the winter of this year (1833-34) he spent some months in St Petersburg as secretary to the English consul-general ; but on his return, settled to the composition of *Paracelsus*, the first of his great dramatic analyses of the individual soul. This ambitious poem was published in 1835, and though it did not become popular, it brought Browning into touch with many of the notable literary figures of the day—with Wordsworth, Landor, Leigh Hunt, Dickens, Carlyle and Forster. In this same year Browning was introduced to the actor Macready,

and consented to write a play for him. The play was *Strafford* (1837). It was not, however, very successful on the stage, and after running at Covent Garden for five nights, came to an end. After this failure Browning declared that he would write no more plays, and took up the composition of *Sordello*, a study of six thousand lines on the troubadour poet of that name.

Before *Sordello* was published (1840) Browning had, however, paid his first visit to Italy in 1838. He visited Venice, Padua, Asolo, and returned through the Tyrol and down the Rhine to Antwerp. This tour was of the greatest importance in firing his imagination and in storing his mind with pictures ; and the period which followed his return to London was rich in the production of both lyrical and dramatic work.

The poems of these years were issued in small pamphlets entitled *Bells and Pomegranates* ; the lyrical drama, *Pippa Passes*, the flower of his early genius, came in 1841, to be followed by a play, *King Victor and King Charles* in 1842. The first edition of *Dramatic Lyrics* appeared also in 1842, and two more plays, *The Return of the Druses* and *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* in 1843. *Colombe's Birthday* was published in 1844, *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* in 1845, and the last two dramas, *Luria* and *A Soul's Tragedy*, in 1846. Of the plays here mentioned only one, *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*, was performed at the time, and this production (at Drury Lane in 1843) was an undoubted success.

In 1844 Browning paid his second visit to Italy, visiting Rome and Naples. This year also saw the beginning of a correspondence with his future wife, the poetess Elizabeth Barrett. Miss Barrett's volume of 1844, *Lady Geraldine's Courtship*, had contained an appreciative reference to the poet of the "Pomegranates", and Browning took the occasion to write and thank the author for this compliment, expressing at the same time his own admiration for her work.

As the result of a riding accident, Elizabeth Barrett, now thirty-five years of age, had long been a semi-invalid, and lived an imprisoned life in her father's house in Wimpole Street, seeing only an occasional woman friend. Her father, a stern business man, was austere in his religious beliefs and tyrannical in domestic affairs. None of his three daughters dared cross his slightest wish, and marriage was out of the question for any of them. Nevertheless, a very busy correspondence was kept up between Browning and Miss Barrett in the early months of 1845, and in May of that year, Browning paid his first visit to his future wife. The friendship, which on both sides gradually ripened into love, was health and strength to Miss Barrett : in March 1846 the lovers were secretly engaged, and in the summer Miss Barrett was well enough to drive and walk in London. But Mr Barrett was becoming suspicious of Browning's visits to Wimpole Street, and the lovers knew that some action must be speedily planned. An open marriage was impossible, so Browning and Elizabeth Barrett were secretly married at Marylebone Church on September 12th, and a week later escaped to Southampton to catch the boat to Le Havre. After spending a week in Paris, they journeyed south to Genoa, and thence to Pisa, where they settled for some months.

The fifteen years that followed were not without trials and sorrow : Mr Barrett never forgave his daughter her revolt against parental tyranny, and at his death her letters to him were found unopened ; Browning's mother, to whom the poet had been especially devoted, died in 1849 ; and the union of the two poets was subject, in spite of the idealism of their strange wooing, to inevitable strains and difficulties. But the marriage also brought great happiness. "We are as happy," writes Browning in December 1847, "as two owls in a hole, two toads under a tree-stump ; or any other queer two poking creatures that we let live after the fashion of their black hearts, only Ba [his wife] is fat and rosy ; yes indeed."

These years were spent mainly in Florence, where, from 1848, Casa Guidi was their home; but long periods were spent in Siena, Rome and Pisa, and several visits were paid to Paris and London. Browning's only son, Robert Wiedmann Browning, was born in 1849, and as time went on, a large number of friends, English and American, were added to their circle.

These years were fruitful in poetry. Browning's *Christmas Eve and Easter Day* was published in 1850, and the volumes containing his finest dramatic monologues, the two volumes of *Men and Women*, in 1855. Both the poet and his wife were also keenly interested in the political and revolutionary struggles going on at this time in Italy and France. Browning was not as ardent a supporter of "Liberty" as his wife or the Romantic poets Shelley and Byron, but he was distinctly liberal in outlook. His sonnet *Why I am a Liberal* best indicates the nature and temper of his political views.

In 1860, when Browning was at the height of his energy and filled with his new passion for clay-modelling, Mrs Browning's health was obviously declining, and in June 1861 she developed bronchitis. Though there seemed no cause for alarm, the end came suddenly, and she passed away on the morning of June 29th.

For a time Browning's grief was uncontrolled, but he soon began to face his loneliness with characteristic courage; his poetry, moreover, and the education of his boy, remained to him as objects of his activity. But he could not bear to stay in Florence nor even in Italy, and in the autumn settled in Warwick Crescent, Paddington. This, apart from almost annual holidays in the Pyrenees, Brittany, Normandy, the Alps and (after 1878) Italy, was his home for twenty-six years. At first he lived much in solitude, but in 1863 he decided "that this mode of life was morbid and unworthy," and he began gradually to take a regular place in London society. He was possessed of admirable intellectual powers,

was sympathetic and a good talker ; thus he was welcome everywhere and made many friends.

Dramatis Personæ, which continued the studies begun in *Men and Women*, was published in 1864, and from this time dates Browning's wider popularity in England. The publication in 1868-69 of his greatest work, *The Ring and the Book*, set the crown on his fame. The universities began to honour him : Oxford with the degree of M.A. and an Honorary Fellowship of Balliol in 1867, St Andrews with the offer of the Rectorship in 1869 and again in 1884—an offer declined on both occasions—Cambridge with the LL.D. in 1879, Oxford with the D.C.L. in 1882, and Edinburgh with the LL.D. in 1884. The Royal Society appointed him Foreign Correspondent in 1886, and the "Browning Society" was founded by Dr Furnivall and friends in 1881. Browning's position in contemporary opinion was secured, and, as he said jokingly to a friend, Tennyson and he " seemed to be regarded as the two kings of Brentford."

Volumes of poetry succeeded each other at intervals through all these later years. Three volumes were largely classical in subject-matter: these were *Balaustion's Adventure*, including a transcript of the *Alkestis* of Euripides (1871), *Aristophanes' Apology*, including a transcript of the *Herakles* of Euripides (1875), and a literal translation of the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus (1877). Of the other volumes the most important were the two series of dramatic narratives entitled *Dramatic Idylls*, 1879-80, and two volumes of lyrical and miscellaneous poems, *Pacchiarotto . . . and Other Poems*, 1876, and *Asolando*, published on the day of the poet's death in 1889. These later volumes, whilst they have not the poetic beauty of Browning's earlier work, show no decline in intellectual force.

In 1887 Browning moved from Warwick Crescent to a more spacious house in De Vere Gardens, and in the same year his

son married and settled in Venice. Two years later Browning set out to visit him there. On his way he revisited Asolo, and (so little had his old vitality declined) was "possessed by a strange buoyancy, an almost feverish joy in life," at finding himself again in the district of which he had become so enamoured on his first visit to Italy fifty years before. He began to negotiate for the purchase of a piece of land on which stood an unfinished house which he intended to complete; but when he went on to Venice he fell ill with bronchial trouble and heart failure ensued. Until a few hours before the end, there was no doubt in the poet's mind that he would recover; but this was not to be: he died quietly on the evening of December 12th (1889), and on the last day of the year was buried in the Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey.

Browning's poetry and the record of his actions give the best clues to the understanding of his personality, and the testimony of many friends and acquaintances confirms the truth of the impressions which we derive from the study of his life and works. One such pen-picture (of Browning in his later years) may be quoted here to show the man in miniature :

It may safely be alleged that no one meeting Mr Browning for the first time, and unfurnished with a clue, would guess his vocation. He might be a diplomatist, a statesman, a discoverer, or a man of science. But, whatever were his calling, we should feel that it must be essentially practical. . . . His conversation corresponds to his appearance. It abounds in vigour, in fire, in vivacity. Yet all the time it is entirely free from mystery, vagueness, or technical jargon. It is the crisp, emphatic and powerful discourse of a man of the world, who is incomparably better informed than the mass of his congeners. Mr Browning is the readiest, the blithest, and the most forcible of talkers. Like the Monsignore in *Lothair* he can "sparkle with anecdote and blaze with repartee," and when he deals in criticism the edge of his sword is mercilessly whetted against pretension

and vanity. The inflection of his voice, the flash of his eye, the pose of his head, the action of his hand, all lend their special emphasis to the condemnation."

(From *The New Review*, vol. 1; quoted by Dowden, *Life*, pp. 330-31)

This is the figure who stands behind those many and varied human creations of the dramatic monologues ; and the study of Browning's poetry leads us to say of the poet what Landor wrote of the man himself :

Since Chaucer was alive and hale
No man hath walked along our road with step
So active, so enquiring eye, and tongue
So varied in discourse.

II. THE POETRY OF BROWNING

(i) BROWNING'S RELATION WITH THE ROMANTICS : HIS LYRICAL POETRY

In contrast with Tennyson and Arnold, Browning seems, at first sight, to owe little to his forerunners in English poetry, and to venture forth on an entirely individual track in those early and ambitious studies of the development of souls, *Paracelsus* and *Sordello*, and in that sudden plunge into drama in *Strafford*. Few indeed would deny that he was one of the most striking and original men of genius of the Victorian era ; but his isolation is more apparent than real. His boyish passion for Byron and the deeper influence of Shelley upon him—an influence manifest both in the theme and treatment of *Pauline*—are indications of his debt to his predecessors ; and while it is true that *Paracelsus* and *Sordello* foretell the intellectual strength of his later work, their poetic worth lies chiefly in passages of lyrical and descriptive beauty, passages in which Browning reveals

himself an inheritor of the wealth and traditions of the Romantic period. *Pippa Passes* (1841), *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842) and *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845) are the fruits of this lyrical or "Romantic" period of Browning's work.

In our pre-occupation with Browning's dramatic monologues and poems of intellectual disquisition, we should not lose sight of the lyrical side of his genius. Despite popular misconceptions, Browning's poetic gift was far from being solely of philosophic cast, and though he often delights in grotesque effects of language and metre, he was by nature endowed with a true and individual power of song.

This gift is seen quite clearly in the early poems. The lyrics of *Pippa Passes*, *Home-Thoughts from Abroad*, *Home-Thoughts from the Sea*, *Meeting at Night* and *Parting at Morning* or the song *Nay but you, who do not love her, . . .* display a variety and delicacy of music worthy of the best traditions of English verse; while in the contrasted music of *Through the Metidja*, *How They Brought the Good News* and *Cavalier Tunes* is found a more dramatic and more conscious use of rhyme and rhythm, which indicates at once the hand of a master in the art of verse music. This lyrical power, which rises to its height in *Saul*, never really failed, although it was buried under other interests and motives, and apparently lost in an elaborate complexity of thought. Even in the later work the purely lyrical breaks out from time to time, as in many passages of *The Ring and the Book*, and in the *Asolando* volume.

(ii) THE "DRAMATIC" IN BROWNING

To insist on the lyrical quality of Browning's genius is not, however, to deny that his work is mainly "dramatic" in substance. He created and developed a new form in English poetry, the "Dramatic Monologue"; and the value of his

poems in this form is not diminished by the fact that his dramas were unsuccessful as stage productions.

Of the different explanations which have been given of this failure in the drama proper, the best is perhaps that of Sir Henry Jones, who attributes Browning's lack of success, first to the fact that there is a tendency for the poet's own personality to obtrude itself into the action of his pieces, and secondly, to the fact that Browning's interest in the development of a soul (beyond which he himself had said that "little else is worth study") often swamps his interest in *action*, which is the essence of drama. These criticisms may also be applied to the later dramatic monologues. The dominance of the psychological interest, of the tendency to concentrate all attention on the inner history of the soul, marks Browning's work after about 1876, and is even noticeable in *Dramatis Personæ* of 1864. The imaginary persons become more and more unsubstantial, and are often but mouthpieces for the poet or the philosopher.

The Ring and the Book is the great exception to this limitation of the period of the fully dramatic in Browning; and in this work and the poems of 1835-64 there is still a large body of poetry which, as the titles of Browning's volumes indicate, is best characterized as "dramatic." This poetry is dramatic in the sense that it represents characters in action, who, in their speech, tell us of themselves and their interlocutors, their deeds, situation and circumstances. The poet has therefore three objects in view; in the speech of a single person he has to present plot, character and scene.

Browning's presentation of the action usually follows one of two methods. According to the first, exemplified in *The Flight of the Duchess*, *Porphyria's Lover*, and more subtly in several books of *The Ring and the Book*, the events of the piece are presented in logical and consequent fashion, almost as in a narrative poem. Situation and characters are revealed

gradually and simultaneously ; and these poems are chiefly dramatic in that the speaker is unconscious of his rôle of narrator and of the fact that, in telling his story, he is revealing himself. According to the second method, Browning keeps the reader in suspense and only reveals the motive of the action fully in the conclusion of the poem. Thus the action of *The Laboratory* is only made clear by the last five stanzas ; *Transcendentalism* and *A Likeness* are other examples of this method. But whatever the means employed, Browning almost always succeeds in giving us the impression of encountering, as if by chance, living characters in action.

It is the characters themselves who have the greatest interest for Browning. They are rarely revealed in their outward aspect, but their souls are laid bare before us in their language and sentiments ; and all the devices of diction, imagery and rime are employed by the poet to render the medium expressive of the personality of the speaker. The *Dramatic Romances*, *Men and Women*, and *The Ring and the Book* provide a vast and varied gallery of characters, of whom the Duke of Ferrara in *My Last Duchess*, Karshish, Fra Lippo Lippi, Caliban, and the four chief actors in the story of *The Ring and the Book* are the greatest and most notable.

The suggestion of the scene in these dramatic monologues is admirably carried out. Browning's visual and auditory perceptions were extremely acute, and his power of description is evident throughout his poetry (cf. for example the wonderful scene of the discovery of the *Old Yellow Book* at the opening of *The Ring and the Book*, or the opening of *Christmas Eve*).

In some poems (e.g. *Fra Lippo Lippi*) the scene is presented for us early in the poem, and this is necessary in longer works such as *Bishop Blougram* ; but a much more dramatic method is used in those poems in which the scene is built up before our eyes by a number of successive

touches. In such poems situation and scene are, as it were, crystallized out together. It is thus that the scene is presented in the *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister*, in *Up at a Villa*, or with still greater artistry in *Andrea del Sarto*, which is Browning's finest piece of dramatic atmosphere. Occasionally, as in *A Toccata of Galuppi's*, the gradual completion of the scene is the means by which the characters and sentiments are revealed.

But as in the case of the action in his poems, Browning's most vivid effects are gained by the use of suspense, and there are many cases in which he increases our curiosity and the force of his climax, by withholding the presentation of the scene (in part, at least) until the end of the poem. *Respectability*, *My Last Duchess* and *Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha* are notable examples of this method ; and these monologues are thus rendered still more dramatic by the manner of their conclusion, for we are called from our character-study by the course of outer events, which break in upon the words and actions of the persons represented, as they do in the real world of every-day.

In other works this dramatic device, of which Browning was evidently fond, is used to conclude a poem which is not itself dramatic. *Christmas Eve* terminates in this way ; *Count Gismond*, a narrative poem, and *A Serenade at the Villa*, a shadowy lyrical piece, become vividly dramatic in the last stanza.

(iii) BROWNING'S TREATMENT OF NATURE

In his treatment of nature, Browning, like most of his contemporaries, was inevitably influenced by the nature poetry of the Romantic era. Certain notes in his work are reminiscent of his early master Shelley. The love of a wide expanse, of the open sky and the wind,¹ a keen eye for effects

¹ Cf. *Two in the Campagna*, stanza v ; *Saul*, ll. 319-20.

of light and colour, especially for the transformations worked by dawn and sunset,¹ a power of seizing the more ethereal qualities of a landscape²—these characteristics he has in common with Shelley. But Browning has also his own particular notes. He has an intense love of the quaint and humble creatures of the earth with their own secret life³; and his power of concrete presentation of nature, especially of certain kinds of detail, is even more vivid than that of Shelley. He is not blind to the quiet beauty of pastoral scenes,⁴ but it is the bright colour and jagged forms of Italian mountain landscape which appeal to him most strongly.⁵

It is not surprising that Browning, an active rather than a reflective genius, should have little in common with the Wordsworthian philosophy of Nature. To the external beauty of Nature he is not indeed less sensible than Wordsworth himself, and at times enters sympathetically into its life:

Oh, good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth,
 This autumn morning ! How he sets his bones
 To bask i' the sun, and thrusts out knees and feet
 For the ripple to run over in its mirth ;
 Listening the while, where on the heap of stones
 The white breast of the sea-lark twitters sweet.

and there are times, again, in which he feels the influence of the Spirit of Nature, and perceives a sympathy existing between Nature and Man, as in the last stanza of *Saul*, in *Meeting at Night* or *By the Fire-side* (stanzas xlvi-xlviii); but as a rule Man and Nature are for Browning separate entities, Man being a creation of a different and higher order. Thus in

¹ Cf. especially the magnificent prelude to *Pippa Passes*.

² Cf. *Saul*, ll. 324-31.

³ See *Garden Fancies*, *Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis*, and *Letters of R. B. and E. B. B.*, i. 370-71.

⁴ Cf. *Saul*, ll. 136-39; *Meeting at Night* and *Love among the Ruins*.

⁵ See *The Englishman in Italy*, *Up at a Villa*, *Saul*, ll. 104-10, *By the Fire-side*, ll. 44-65, and *Easter-Day*, Sect. 15.

By the Fire-side it is but for a moment that the powers of Nature react on human life :

Their work was done—we might go or stay,
They relapsed to their ancient mood.

(Stanza xlviii)

In *Childe Roland* Nature is definitely hostile to Man's idealism, and plays a spiteful and sinister rôle.

(iv) PHILOSOPHY AND ATTITUDE TO HUMAN LIFE

Browning's own age was often too much inclined to value art or poetry for its presentation of moral truth. The twentieth century, on the other hand, has sometimes run into the opposite error and tried to conceive of æsthetic form as independent of intellectual or moral conceptions. The world's greatest poetry, however, is not to be explained along either of these lines ; and Shelley was much nearer the truth when, in his *Defence of Poetry*, he described the "supreme poets" as those in whose work verbal music, and imaginative form and action, were indissolubly fused with perception of "the truth of things."

Browning himself felt that the poet's mission was to discover and illuminate the truth of human experience, but his aim was truth caught imaginatively, not conceived in the abstract, and in all his best work, especially in *Men and Women*, thought and artistry constitute a perfect unity ; so that we may well agree with the opinion of the French critic and friend of Browning, Joseph Milsand, who wrote in 1851 :

Of all the poets known to me, he is the most capable of summing up the conceptions of the religion, the ethics, and the theoretic knowledge of our period in forms which embody the beauty proper to such abstractions. (Translated by Dowden from the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15th August, 1851. *Life*, p. 148.)

In considering Browning's philosophy of human life and its activities, we can hardly do better than adopt the convenient and traditional division of the dramatic monologues into poems of Art, poems of Religion, and poems of Love. Not all the views expressed in these poems are to be accepted as Browning's personal beliefs, for he most often hides himself behind his dramatic creations ; but there is, nevertheless, a common element within each group, and a unity of thought linking all three groups. Behind the dramatic guise we may often catch a glimpse of Browning himself, and from many diverse hints construct a philosophy of art, religion, love, and of life itself, which may be taken as Browning's own faith. And this it is not difficult to do, for his own accent is unmistakable. Time and again his own belief, put into the mouth of a character, breaks through his dramatic constructions with a triumphant note of faith or passion. Such passages stamp themselves by their pure lyricism, their cutting-away of casuistical doubts and their sure declaration of the truth. So Fra Lippo Lippi breaks out in the midst of his discussion on Art and Truth

Oh, oh,
It makes me mad to see what men shall do
And we in our graves ! This world's no blot for us,
Nor blank ; it means intensely, and means good.

(ll. 311-14)

and Bishop Blougram, in his discourse on Faith and Unbelief, suddenly asks himself

Where's
The gain ? how can we guard our unbelief,
Make it bear fruit to us ?—the problem here.
Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides,—
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears

As old and new at once as nature's self,
 To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
 Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,
 Round the ancient idol, on his base again,—
 The grand Perhaps !

(ll. 179-90)

(a) *Poetry of Art*

Browning's interest in art was no mere dilettantism. He was not only an artist in verse, but an accomplished musician, a well-informed student of painting and architecture, and skilful in clay-modelling. His sympathy with the artist in his creation was both practical and philosophic. There are few better interpretations of the artist's transforming power than the last three stanzas of *Saul*.

This sympathy was accompanied in Browning by a wide technical knowledge, especially of music. *Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha* and *A Toccata of Galuppi's* are marvellous translations of musical forms into verse-music and intellectual symbolism ; while in *Abt Vogler* technical values are still more potent in leading the poet to a vision of the truth. It is evident that Browning delights in the technique of music or painting, as of verse, for its own sake, but he is far from believing technical skill to be the most important element in art. Technical perfection may in fact be the artist's greatest snare ; as Andrea del Sarto says of a canvas of Raphael :

That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
 A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
 Its body, so to speak : its soul is right,
 He means right—that, a child may understand.
 Still, what an arm ! and I could alter it :
 But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
 Out of me, out of me !

(ll. 111-17)

"All is silver-grey, Placid and perfect," with Andrea's own art—the worse! "There burns a truer light of God" in the less skilful but more spiritual art of some of his contemporaries. *Old Pictures in Florence* conveys the same thought: better possess the spiritual insight and lack the technical perfection, than have this lesser gift and want the greater:

Make new hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
New fears aggrandize the rags and tatters :
To bring the invisible full into play !
Let the visible go to the dogs—what matters ?

(Stanza xix)

For, as *Abt Vogler* shows, it is the spiritual element in beauty which is immortal.

But if Browning thus stresses the spiritual element in art, this does not mean that he is blind to its sensuous side. Art for him is not mere allegory, not an intellectual pill sugared with sensuous beauty. *Transcendentalism* is a protest against this Medieval and purely intellectual view of art:

But why such long prolusion and display,
Such turning and adjustment of the harp,
And taking it upon your breast, at length,
Only to speak dry words across its strings ?
Stark-naked thought is in request enough :
Speak prose and hollo it till Europe hears !
The six-foot Swiss tube, braced about with bark,
Which helps the hunter's voice from Alp to Alp—
Exchange our harp for that,—who hinders you ?

(ll. 6-14)

With this passage we may compare *Fra Lippo Lippi*'s protest against purely religious art (*Fra Lippo Lippi*, ll. 316-35). *Fra Lippo Lippi*, which is Browning's most vital study of the mind of an artist, is indeed a passionate defence of physical beauty :

Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—
 (I never saw it—put the case the same—)
 If you get simple beauty and nought else,
 You get about the best thing God invents :
 That's somewhat : and you'll find the soul you have missed,
 Within yourself, when you return him thanks.

• • • • • You've seen the world

—The beauty and the wonder and the power,
 The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,
 Changes, surprises,—and God made it all !
 —For what ? Do you feel thankful, ay or no,
 For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
 The mountain round it and the sky above,
 Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
 These are the frame to ? What's it all about ?
 To be passed over, despised ? or dwelt upon,
 Wondered at ?

(ll. 215-20 and 282-92)

This same poem gives us the first and simplest answer to the question “Of what use is art ?” Art, says Browning, opens our eyes to the beauty of the world around us :

Don't object, “ His works
 Are here already ; nature is complete :
 Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)
 There's no advantage ! you must beat her, then.”
 For, don't you mark, we're made so that we love
 First when we see them painted, things we have passed
 Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see ;
 And so they are better, painted—better to us,
 Which is the same thing. Art was given for that ;
 God uses us to help each other so,
 Lending our minds out.

(ll. 296-306)

It is this comprehensive or double view of art which makes the sanity of Browning's æsthetic philosophy. Flesh and spirit, form and content, are for him inseparable companions ;

and if he stresses particularly the value of the spiritual in art (and rightly so), he does not undervalue the sensuous form in which the spiritual is embodied.

Despite the great importance which Browning attributes to art, he never loses sight of the fact that life is greater than art, or that life itself is the greatest art of all. As Cleon writes to Protus :

Because in my great epos I display
 How divers men young, strong, fair, wise, can act—
 Is this as though I acted ? if I paint,
 Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore young ?
 Methinks I'm older that I bowed myself
 The many years of pain that taught me art !
 Indeed, to know is something, and to prove
 How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more :
 But, knowing nought, to enjoy is something too.
 Yon rower, with the moulded muscles there,
 Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.
 I can write love-odes : thy fair slave's an ode.
 I get to sing of love, when grown too grey
 For being beloved : she turns to that young man,
 The muscles all a-ripple on his back.
 I know the joy of kingship : well, thou art king !

(ll. 285-300)

The same question is asked of poet, musician and sculptor in *The Last Ride Together* (stanzas vii-viii) :

And you, great sculptor—so you gave
 A score of years to Art, her slave,
 And that's your Venus, whence we turn
 To yonder girl that fords the burn !

(b) *Religious and Ethical Thought*

Among the problems of human life which perplexed Browning's day, questions of religious belief were pre-eminent, and it is very natural that a large group of Browning's studies should take up problems of faith and unbelief, of science and

religion, of spiritualism and of Christianity.¹ Such questions predominate especially in the poems written during the years of Browning's married life in Italy, and published in the volumes *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*, *Men and Women* and *Dramatis Personæ*.

Several poems, notably the *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister*, *Holy Cross Day*, *The Heretic's Tragedy*, and *The Bishop orders his Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church* express clearly enough Browning's impatience with mere orthodoxy and with all religious shams and hypocrisy. Other finer studies, whilst preserving the dramatic form, have not the same ironic tone ; they are much more seriously conceived, and the poet joins with his characters in a search for truth and God, a search which, though often blind or misguided, is usually sincere. Disregard of mere dogma still persists, but is accompanied by a recognition of the difficulties of religious belief and of the conduct of life. *Bishop Blougram's Apology*, *Christmas Eve*, *Easter Day*, and *Caliban upon Setebos* are all marked by this tolerant sincerity.

One of Browning's main beliefs is that intellect alone, even aided by historical testimony, is insufficient in religious experience. Man finds God by the use of intuition or imagination in conjunction with his reasoning faculty. (Cf. *Bishop Blougram's Apology*, ll. 173 ff. and 845 ff.)

Secondly, Browning believes in the love of God as the corner-stone of religion, in the same way as the love of man for his fellow is the foundation of ethics. *Caliban upon Setebos* is an attempt to picture a God without love, while *Christmas Eve* exalts those religious forms in which simple love of God is most evident. *Saul* is a prophecy, and the *Epistle of Karshish* a recognition, of the love of God as revealed in Christ. The hearts of the Jewish shepherd-lad

¹ Note that, despite Browning's liberal sympathies, the political and industrial unrest of his age finds hardly any expression in his poetry.

and of the Arab physician turn longingly towards a God who should be All-Loving as All-Great :

The very God ! think, Abib ; dost thou think ?
 So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too—
 So, through the thunder comes a human voice
 Saying, " O heart I made, a heart beats here !
 Face, My hands fashioned, see it in Myself.
 Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of Mine,
 But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
 And thou must love Me who have died for thee ! "
 The madman saith He said so : it is strange.

(*Epistle*, ll. 304-12 ; Cf. *Saul*, stanza xviii)

Of equal importance for Browning is his belief in the immortality of the soul, a faith expressed dramatically with great force in the *Epistle of Karshish* and more lyrically and diffusively in *Saul*, in *A Grammarien's Funeral*, in *Rabbi Ben Ezra* (stanza xxvii) and in *Abt Vogler* (stanzas ix-x). Thus the Grammarien asks :

What's time ? leave Now for dogs and apes !
 Man has forever.

declaring that it is

God's task to make the heavenly period
 Perfect the earthen.

(ll. 83-84, 103-4)

It is on these three religious conceptions that Browning's view of human life and conduct depends. It is because he believes that this world is not the be-all and the end-all, that he is not depressed by the apparent failures and the limitations of life, and is not tied down to the material conditions of mortal existence. Thus Abt Vogler exclaims :

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
 For the fulness of the days ?

(Stanza xi)

and Browning does not hold our human judgment to be a test of the value of a man or of the success of life.

Not on the vulgar mass
Called "work," must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price ; . . .

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account ;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount.
(*Rabbi Ben Ezra*, stanzas xxiii-xxiv ; Cf. *Saul*, l. 295)

From this same faith comes the magnificent courage with which Browning is prepared to meet both life and death. Failure does not bear him down :

But what if I fail of my purpose here ?
It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
And, baffled, get up and begin again,—
So the chace takes up one's life, that's all.

(*Life in a Love*, ll. 11-15 ; Cf. *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, stanza vi)

And death is but a last encounter, of which he desires to "taste the whole,"

I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last !

(*Prospero*)

Such courage is not blind rashness. It is a faith which welcomes difficulty and failure as steps in the spiritual struggle and progress by which Man perfects himself. Browning was not an ascetic ; he valued life for its own sake, crying :

Oh, the wild joys of living ! . . .
How good is man's life, the mere living ! . . .
(*Saul*, ll. 70-78)

but he valued it still more as a battlefield in which victories of the spirit were to be won.

(c) *Love Poetry*

All Browning's love poetry, with the exception of his songs, the address to his wife in *One Word More*, and the semi-autobiographical *By the Fire-side*, was cast in dramatic form; and most of his studies tell of unhappy or unsuccessful love. Throughout these poems, despite their great variety, two notes stand out quite clearly: first, the courage with which failure or tragedy is met, and secondly, the conception of life as determined at certain critical moments by decisive action or the lack of it.¹ Thus in *By the Fire-side*, love, the perfect harmony between two souls, is attained by the decision of the lover:

How the world is made for each of us !
 How all we perceive and know in it
 Tends to some moment's product thus,
 When a soul declares itself—to wit,
 By its fruit, the thing it does !

• • • • •
 I am named and known by that moment's feat ;
 There took my station and degree ; . . .

(Stanzas xlix-li)

for, as the lover reflects in an earlier stanza (xxxix):

Oh, the little more, and how much it is !
 And the little less, and what worlds away !
 How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
 Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
 And life be a proof of this !

In various other poems, *Youth and Art, Too Late*, and *The Statue and the Bust*, the critical moment is let slip, and life

¹ The plot of Browning's early lyrical drama, *Pippa Passes*, is built up on a series of such critical moments in the lives of four groups of people. See note on p. 202.

becomes—whatever its outward show—an empty failure. *The Statue and the Bust* is especially typical of Browning's attitude; each of the lovers continually postpones action, and so days, months, years slip by until love fades away. The fact that this love is illicit matters not to Browning :

. . . Oh, a crime will do
As well, I reply, to serve for a test,
As a virtue golden through and through.

.
And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost
Is, the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.

(ll. 227-48)

* * * * *

Certain elements of faith emerge, as has been hinted, from these different groups of poems. Through them all Browning stresses the pre-eminence of the spiritual in Man, and the need for continuous struggle to achieve the best in life. He believes in the ultimate victory of Good, and in aspiration after the immortal as of greater value than earthly success. This whole philosophy is admirably summed up in the well-known lines of *A Grammarian's Funeral* :

That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it :
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.
That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred's soon hit :
This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit.
That, has the world here—should he need the next,
Let the world mind him !
This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
Seeking shall find Him.

(ll. 113-24)

This is the nature of that optimism which is often glibly

imputed to Browning as a crime. This optimism is not a mere unreasonable chanting of "All's right with the world"; it is a philosophic grappling with life, a faith wrung out of courageous, and often apparently hopeless, conflict.

One other quality of Browning's attitude to life must also be remembered—his humour. Browning's mood is far from being always serious, and he is, in fact, closely allied to the great novelists of his age in his sympathetic humour and humorous presentation of scenes and persons. A sly humour creeps into many of his more serious studies such as *A Toccata of Galuppi's*, *Fra Lippo Lippi*, *Caliban upon Setebos*; and the comic runs full course in such narrative or realistic poems as *The Pied Piper*, *Holy-Cross Day* or *Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha*, and in parts of *The Ring and the Book*. The opening and concluding scenes of *Christmas Eve* are masterpieces of realistic humour.

(v) VERSE, DICTION AND IMAGERY

It might have been expected that Browning's love of realism, and the vitality and complexity of his thought, would have robbed his work of much of the technical beauty of verse-rhythm, but as has been shown in regard to his lyrics, this is far from true. He is possessed of great metrical skill and employs a great variety of stanza-forms, besides excelling in blank verse of a flexible and dramatic kind. "His blank verse," writes a recent critic, "has a wider range than that of any other English poet, for he can use it not only for high poetry but also, very effectively, for the purposes for which Shakespeare used prose."¹ The virility of his

¹ D. C. Somervell in the essay cited in the Bibliography. W. P. Ker points out how Browning's love of variation and resolution of feet in his blank verse is severely curbed in his most solemn passages or in passages of pure beauty. He quotes in illustration the opening of "O lyric love . . ." and the beginning of *Cleon*. (See essay quoted in Bibliography.)

expression, his onomatopœic power, and his dexterity in rime are obvious in all his work. Even more noteworthy are his command of diction and his choice of imagery.

Browning is never at a loss for the appropriate word. His imaginative expression is well illustrated in the complete and vivid picture contained in the lines :

. . . the cool silver shock
Of the plunge in a pool's living water.

(Saul, ll. 71-72)

He has a particular aptitude for vivid close-packed diction, when scorn or indignation is intended :

Back he held the brow, and pricked its stigma,
Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment.
(One Word More, Stanza v)

and this force is especially remarkable when comic or grotesque effects are required, as in *The Pied Piper*, *Master Hugues* or *Holy-Cross Day*. It is no doubt this energy of thought and expression which renders Browning so entirely free from "poetic diction." No poet has better followed Wordsworth's advice to look steadily at his subject—intensively one might say in the case of Browning.

But Browning's diction is equally well adapted to more sober occasions. There are many purely lyrical passages of simple, exact expression ; and Browning has a gift at times comparable with that of Milton or Wordsworth for single lines of beautiful simplicity, as these from *Andrea del Sarto* (ll. 35, 150) :

A common greyness silvers everything.

.
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau.

or this verse from *The Lost Leader*,

Never glad confident morning again!

(l. 28)

Browning has a splendid sense of imagery, and it is this feature which contributes most to the impression of power and energy which fills all his work. Images start forth as it were unbidden from his pen, racy and vigorous, or coloured and beautiful, but always appropriate. Thus one might contrast the description of the opening of the gate in *A Serenade at the Villa*:

the iron gate
Ground its teeth to let me pass—

or the extended and admirable image of the IXth Stanza of *One Word More*, with David's beautiful picture of Saul:

or with the description of the wild tulip in *Up at a Villa, Down in the City*:

'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three fingers
well,
The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red bell
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick and
sell.

(ll. 23-25)

In lines such as these the true alchemy of the poet's art is manifest.

(vi) REPUTATION AS A POET

The most serious and persistent charges which have been laid against Browning as a poet, have been those of "obscurity" and of "moralizing." The grounds of the first charge have often been exaggerated. Much of Browning's "obscurity" is due to the extent of his learning, the wealth of his vocabulary, or the rapidity and complexity of his thought ; and obscurities such as these can be explained, and so cease to cause difficulty. On the other hand there are many passages, both in the early and later work, in which Browning does wilful violence to diction and syntax, with tedious consequences for his readers ; and it is easy to see how his poetry should often have compared unfavourably with the more conscious artistry and more polished perfection of his contemporary, Tennyson.

The other charge, of "intellectualism" or "moralizing," must also be partly admitted. There is a good deal in some of the later volumes which might be equally well told in prose ; but the charge falls absolutely flat against the great body of the lyrical and dramatic poems extending from the *Dramatic Lyrics* of 1842 to *The Ring and the Book* of 1868-69. In these volumes thought and sensibility, ideas and imagery —to use the clumsy terms by which we try to distinguish the mingled elements of a work of art—achieve a true poetic harmony.

SELECTIONS FROM BROWNING

SONGS FROM "PARACELSIUS"

I

HEAP cassia, sandal-buds and stripes
Of labdanum, and aloe-balls,
Smeared with dull nard an Indian wipes
From out her hair : such balsam falls
Down sea-side mountain pedestals,
From tree-tops where tired winds are fain,
Spent with the vast and howling main,
To treasure half their island-gain.

And strew faint sweetness from some old
Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud
Which breaks to dust when once unrolled ;
Or shredded perfume, like a cloud
From closet long to quiet vowed,
With mothed and dropping arras hung,
Mouldering her lute and books among,
As when a queen, long dead, was young.

10

II

Thus the Mayne glideth
Where my Love abideth.
Sleep 's no softer : it proceeds
On through lawns, on through meads,
On and on, whate'er befall,
Meandering and musical,

1

Though the niggard pasturage
Bears not on its shaven ledge
Aught but weeds and waving grasses
To view the river as it passes, 10
Save here and there a scanty patch
Of primroses too faint to catch
A weary bee. And scarce it pushes
Its gentle way through strangling rushes
Where the glossy kingfisher
Flutters when noon-heats are near,
Glad the shelving banks to shun,
Red and steaming in the sun,
Where the shrew-mouse with pale throat
Burrows, and the speckled stoat ; 20
Where the quick sandpipers flit
In and out the marl and grit
That seems to breed them, brown as they :
Nought disturbs its quiet way,
Save some lazy stork that springs,
Trailing it with legs and wings,
Whom the shy fox from the hill
Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.

SONGS FROM "PIPPA PASSES"

I

THE year's at the spring,
 And day's at the morn ;
 Morning's at seven ;
 The hill-side's dew-pearled ;
 The lark's on the wing ;
 The snail's on the thorn ;
 God's in His heaven—
 All's right with the world !

II

I

GIVE her but a least excuse to love me !
 When—where—
 How—can this arm establish her above me,
 If fortune fixed her as my lady there,
 There already, to eternally reprove me ?
 ("Hist!"—said Kate the Queen ;
 But "Oh," cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
 "T is only a page that carols unseen,
 Crumbling your hounds their messes !")

II

Is she wronged ?—To the rescue of her honour,
 My heart !
 Is she poor ?—What costs it to be styled a donor ?
 Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part.

But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her!
 ("Nay, list!"—bade Kate the Queen;
 And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
 " 'T is only a page that carols unseen,
 Fitting your hawks their jesses!")

III

You 'll love me yet!—and I can tarry
 Your love's protracted growing:
 June reared that bunch of flowers you carry,
 From seeds of April's sowing.

I plant a heartful now: some seed
 At least is sure to strike,
 And yield—what you 'll not pluck indeed,
 Not love, but, may be, like.

You 'll look at least on love's remains,
 A grave's one violet:
 Your look?—that pays a thousand pains.
 What's death? You 'll love me yet!

DRAMATIC LYRICS

CAVALIER TUNES

I

MARCHING ALONG

I

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing:
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,
Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

II

God for King Charles ! Pym and such carles
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles !
Cavaliers, up ! Lips from the cup,
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
Till you 're—

10

*(Chorus) Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.*

III

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well !
England, good cheer ! Rupert is near !
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here

*(Chorus) Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song ?*

IV

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his snarls
 To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles!
 Hold by the right, you double your might;
 So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

20

(Chorus) *March we along, fifty-score strong,
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!*

II

GIVE A ROUSE

I

KING CHARLES, and who 'll do him right now?
 King Charles, and who 's ripe for fight now?
 Give a rouse: here 's, in hell's despite now,
 King Charles!

II

Who gave me the goods that went since?
 Who raised me the house that sank once?
 Who helped me to gold I spent since?
 Who found me in wine you drank once?

(Chorus) *King Charles, and who 'll do him right now?
 King Charles, and who 's ripe for fight now?* 10
*Give a rouse: here 's, in hell's despite now,
 King Charles!*

III

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
 By the old fool's side that begot him?
 For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
 While Noll's damned troopers shot him?

(Chorus) *King Charles, and who 'll do him right now?
 King Charles, and who 's ripe for fight now?*
*Give a rouse: here 's, in hell's despite now,
 King Charles!* 20

III
BOOT AND SADDLE

I

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !
 Rescue my castle before the hot day
 Brightens to blue from its silvery grey,
 (Chorus) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !*

II

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you 'd say ;
 Many 's the friend there, will listen and pray
 " God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay—
 (Chorus) " *Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !*"

III

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
 Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array : 10
 Who laughs, " Good fellows ere this, by my fay,
 (Chorus) " *Boot, saddle, to horse, and away ?*"

IV

Who ? My wife Gertrude ; that, honest and gay,
 Laughs when you talk of surrendering, " Nay !
 I 've better counsellors ; what counsel they ?
 (Chorus) " *Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !*"

THE LOST LEADER

I

JUST for a handful of silver he left us,
 Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
 Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
 Lost all the others she lets us devote;
 They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
 So much was theirs who so little allowed:
 How all our copper had gone for his service!
 Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud!
 We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,
 Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
 Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
 Made him our pattern to live and to die!
 Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
 Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their graves!
 He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
 He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

10

II

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence;
 Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre;
 Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
 Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire:
 Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
 One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
 One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,
 One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!
 Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!
 There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,

20

Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,
Never glad confident morning again !
Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,
Menace our heart ere we master his own ;
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne !

30

' HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS
FROM GHENT TO AIX "

[16—]

I

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
"Good speed!" cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;
"Speed!" echoed the wall to us galloping through;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

II

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit. 10

III

"T was moonset at starting; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;
At Düffeld, 't was morning as plain as could be;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,
So, Joris broke silence with, " Yet there is time!"

IV

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
 And against him the cattle stood black every one,
 To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past,
 And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
 With resolute shoulders, each butting away
 The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray: 20

▼

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back
 For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track;
 And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance
 O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!
 And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
 His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on. 30

VI

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, "Stay spur!
 Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,
 We'll remember at Aix"—for one heard the quick wheeze
 Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,
 And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
 As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

VII

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
 Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;
 The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
 'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff; 40
 'Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
 And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

VIII

“ How they ’ll greet us ! ”—and all in a moment his roan
 Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone ;
 And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
 Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
 With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
 And with circles of red for his eye-sockets ’ rim.

IX

Then I cast loose my buff-coat, each holster let fall,
 Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all, 50
 Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
 Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer ;
 Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,
 Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

X

And all I remember is—friends flocking round
 As I sat with his head ’twixt my knees on the ground ;
 And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
 As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
 Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
 Was no more than his due who brought good news from
 Ghent. 60

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR

[1842]

I

AS I ride, as I ride,
With a full heart for my guide,
So its tide rocks my side,
As I ride, as I ride,
That, as I were double-eyed,
He, in whom our Tribes confide,
Is desried, ways untried,
As I ride, as I ride.

II

As I ride, as I ride
To our Chief and his Allied,
Who dares chide my heart's pride
As I ride, as I ride?
Or are witnesses denied—
Through the desert waste and wide
Do I glide unespied
As I ride, as I ride?

10

III

As I ride, as I ride,
When an inner voice has cried,
The sands slide, nor abide
(As I ride, as I ride)
O'er each visioned homicide
That came vaunting (has he lied?)
To reside—where he died,
As I ride, as I ride.

20

IV

As I ride, as I ride,
Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,
Yet his hide, streaked and pied,
As I ride, as I ride,
Shows where sweat has sprung and dried,
—Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—
How has vied stride with stride
As I ride, as I ride!

30

V

As I ride, as I ride,
Could I loose what Fate has tied,
Ere I pried, she should hide
(As I ride, as I ride)
All that's meant me—satisfied
When the Prophet and the Bride
Stop veins I'd have subside
As I ride, as I ride!

40

GARDEN FANCIES

I

THE FLOWER'S NAME

I

HERE 'S the garden she walked across,
 Arm in my arm, such a short while since:
 Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss
 Hinders the hinges and makes them wince!
 She must have reached this shrub ere she turned,
 As back with that murmur the wicket swung;
 For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot spurned,
 To feed and forget it the leaves among.

II

Down this side of the gravel-walk
 She went while her robe's edge brushed the box: 10
 And here she paused in her gracious talk
 To point me a moth on the milk-white phlox.
 Roses, ranged in valiant row,
 I will never think that she passed you by!
 She loves you noble roses, I know;
 But yonder, see, where the rock-plants lie!

III

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,
 Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its claim;
 Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,
 Its soft meandering Spanish name: 20

What a name! Was it love or praise?
 Speech half-asleep or song half-awake?
 I must learn Spanish, one of these days,
 Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

IV

Roses, if I live and do well,
 I may bring her, one of these days,
 To fix you fast with as fine a spell,
 Fit you each with his Spanish phrase;
 But do not detain me now; for she lingers
 There, like sunshine over the ground,
 And ever I see her soft white fingers
 Searching after the bud she found. 30

V

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow not,
 Stay as you are and be loved for ever!
 Bud, if I kiss you 't is that you blow not:
 Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never!
 For while it pouts, her fingers wrestle,
 Twinkling the audacious leaves between,
 Till round they turn and down they nestle—
 Is not the dear mark still to be seen? 40

VI

Where I find her not, beauties vanish;
 Whither I follow her, beauties flee;
 Is there no method to tell her in Spanish
 June 's twice June since she breathed it with me?
 Come, bud, show me the least of her traces,
 Treasure my lady's lightest footfall!
 —Ah, you may flout and turn up your faces —
 Roses, you are not so fair after all!

II

SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS

I

PLAGUE take all your pedants, say I!
 He who wrote what I hold in my hand,
 Centuries back was so good as to die,
 Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land;
 This, that was a book in its time,
 Printed on paper and bound in leather,
 Last month in the white of a matin-prime
 Just when the birds sang all together.

II

Into the garden I brought it to read,
 And under the arbute and laurustine
 Read it, so help me grace in my need,
 From title-page to closing line.
 Chapter on chapter did I count,
 As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge;
 Added up the mortal amount;
 And then proceeded to my revenge.

10

III

Yonder's a plum-tree with a crevice
 An owl would build in, were he but sage;
 For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis
 In a castle of the Middle Age,
 Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber;
 When he'd be private, there might he spend
 Hours alone in his lady's chamber:
 Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

20

IV

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,
 —At the bottom, I knew, rain-drippings stagnate;
 Next, a handful of blossoms I plucked
 To bury him with, my bookshelf's magnate;
 Then I went in-doors, brought out a loaf,
 Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis;
 Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf
 Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

30

V

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss
 And gum that locked our friend in limbo,
 A spider had spun his web across,
 And sat in the midst with arms akimbo:
 So, I took pity, for learning's sake,
 And, *de profundis, accentibus lætis,*
Cantate! quoth I, as I got a rake,
 And up I fished his delectable treatise.

40

VI

Here you have it, dry in the sun,
 With all the binding all of a blister,
 And great blue spots where the ink has run,
 And reddish streaks that wink and glister
 O'er the page so beautifully yellow:
 Oh, well have the droppings played their tricks!
 Did he guess how toadstools grow, this fellow?
 Here's one stuck in his chapter six!

VII

How did he like it when the live creatures
 Tickled and toused and browsed him all over,
 And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,
 Came in, each one, for his right of trover?

50

—When the water-beetle with great blind deaf face
 Made of her eggs the stately deposit,
 And the newt borrowed just so much of the preface
 As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet?

VIII

All that life and fun and romping,
 All that frisking and twisting and coupling,
 While slowly our poor friend's leaves were swamping
 And clasps were cracking and covers suppling!
 As if you had carried sour John Knox
 To the play-house at Paris, Vienna, or Munich,
 Fastened him into a front-row box,
 And danced off the ballet with trousers and tunic.

60

IX

Come, old martyr! What, torment enough is it?
 Back to my room shall you take your sweet self.
 Good-bye, mother-beetle; husband-eft, *sufficit*!
 See the snug niche I have made on my shelf!
 A.'s book shall prop you up, B.'s shall cover you,
 Here's C.'s to be grave with, or D. to be gay,
 And with E. on each side, and F. right over you,
 Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day!

70

SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER

I

GR-R-R—there go, my heart's abhorrence!
 Water your damned flower-pots, do!
 If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
 God's blood, would not mine kill you!
 What? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?
 Oh, that rose has prior claims—
 Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
 Hell dry you up with its flames!

II

At the meal we sit together:
Salve tibi! I must hear
 Wise talk of the kind of weather,
 Sort of season, time of year:
Not a plenteous cork-crop: scarcely
Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt:
What's the Latin name for "parsley"?
What's the Greek name for Swine's Snout?

10

III

Whew! We'll have our platter burnished,
 Laid with care on our own shelf!
 With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,
 And a goblet for ourself,
 Rinsed like something sacrificial
 Ere 't is fit to touch our chaps—
 Marked with L. for our initial!
 (He-he! There his lily snaps!)

20

IV

Saint, forsooth! While brown Dolores
 Squats outside the Convent bank
 With Sanchicha, telling stories,
 Steeping tresses in the tank,
 Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,
 —Can't I see his dead eye glow,
 Bright as 't were a Barbary corsair's?
 (That is, if he 'd let it show !)

30

V

When he finishes refection,
 Knife and fork he never lays
 Cross-wise, to my recollection,
 As do I, in Jesu's praise.
 I the Trinity illustrate,
 Drinking watered orange-pulp—
 In three sips the Arian frustrate;
 While he drains his at one gulp.

40

VI

Oh, those melons? If he 's able
 We 're to have a feast; so nice!
 One goes to the Abbot's table,
 All of us get each a slice.
 How go on your flowers? None double?
 Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
 Strange!—And I, too, at such trouble
 Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

VII

There 's a great text in Galatians,
 Once you trip on it, entails
 Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
 One sure, if another fails:

50

If I trip him just a-dying,
 Sure of heaven as sure can be,
 Spin him round and send him flying
 Off to hell, a Manichee?

VIII

Or, my scrofulous French novel
 On grey paper with blunt type!
 Simply glance at it, you grovel
 Hand and foot in Belial's gripe:
 If I double down its pages
 At the woeful sixteenth print,
 When he gathers his greengages,
 Ope a sieve and slip it in 't?

60

IX

Or, there's Satan!—one might venture
 Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
 Such a flaw in the indenture
 As he'd miss till, past retrieve,
 Blasted lay that rose-acacia
 We're so proud of! *Hy, Zy, Hine . . .*
 *St, there's Vespers! *Plena gratia*
Ave, Virgo! Gr-r-r—you swine!

70

MEETING AT NIGHT

I

THE grey sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed in the slushy sand.

II

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each !

PARTING AT MORNING

ROUND the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's rim:
And straight was a path of gold for him,
And the need of a world of men for me.

SONG

I

NAY but you, who do not love her,
Is she not pure gold, my mistress?
Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her?
Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
And this last fairest tress of all,
So fair, see, ere I let it fall?

II

Because, you spend your lives in praising;
To praise, you search the wide world over:
Then why not witness, calmly gazing,
If earth holds aught—speak truth—above her?
Above this tress, and this, I touch
But cannot praise, I love so much!

10

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY

(As Distinguished by an Italian Person of Quality)

I

Had I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,
 The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-
 square;
 Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!

II

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least!
 There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast;
 While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a beast.

III

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull
 Just on a mountain's edge as bare as the creature's skull,
 Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!
 —I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's turned
 wool.

10

IV

But the city, oh the city—the square with the houses! Why?
 They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something to take
 the eye!
 Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry;
 You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who hurries
 by;
 Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun gets
 high;
 And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted properly.

▼

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by rights,
'T is May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well off
the heights:

You 've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen steam
and wheeze,
And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint grey olive-
trees.

20

VI

Is it better in May, I ask you? You 've summer all at once;
In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns.
'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three fingers
well,
The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red bell
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick and
sell.

VII

Is it ever hot in the square? There 's a fountain to spout and
splash!
In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foam-bows
flash
On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and paddle and
push
Round the lady atop in the conch—fifty gazers do not abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist in a
sort of sash.

30

VIII

All the year long at the villa, nothing 's to see though you linger,
Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted forefinger.
Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix in the corn and
mingle,
Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.

Late August or early September, the stunning cicala is shrill,
And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous firs
on the hill.

Enough of the seasons,—I spare you the months of the fever
and chill.

IX

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the blessed church-bells
begin:

No sooner the bells leave off, than the diligence rattles in :
You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a pin. 40
By and by there 's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets blood,
draws teeth;

Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.
At the post-office such a scene-picture—the new play, piping hot !
And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal thieves were
shot.

Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of rebukes,
And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new law
of the Duke's !

Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don So-and-so
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarcha, Saint Jerome and Cicero,
" And moreover," (the sonnet goes rhyming,) " the skirts of
Saint Paul has reached,

Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more unctuous than
ever he preached." 50

Noon strikes,—here sweeps the procession ! our Lady borne
smiling and smart

With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords stuck
in her heart !

Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife;
No keeping one's haunches still : it 's the greatest pleasure in life.

X

But bless you, it 's dear—it 's dear ! fowls, wine, at double the
rate.

They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil pays pass-
ing the gate

It 's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not the city !
Beggars can scarcely be choosers: but still—ah, the pity, the
pity !

Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with cowls
and sandals,

And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the yellow
candles;

60

One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with
handles,

And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better preven-
tion of scandals :

Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.

Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in life !

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S

I

O H Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to find!
I can hardly misconceive you; it would prove me deaf
and blind;
But although I take your meaning, 't is with such a heavy mind!

II

Here you come with your old music, and here 's all the good it
brings.
What, they lived once thus at Venice where the merchants
were the kings,
Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea with
rings?

III

Ay, because the sea 's the street there; and 't is arched by . . .
what you call
. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where they kept the
carnival:
I was never out of England—it 's as if I saw it all.

IV

Did young people take their pleasure when the sea was warm
in May? 10
Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to mid-day,
When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow, do you
say?

v

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips so red,—
On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-flower on its
bed,
O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man might base his
head?

vi

Well, and it was graceful of them—they'd break talk off and
afford
—She, to bite her mask's black velvet—he, to finger on his
sword,
While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the clavichord?

vii

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths diminished,
sigh on sigh,
Told them something? Those suspensions, those solutions—
“Must we die?”
Those commiserating sevenths—“Life might last! we can but
try!”

viii

“Were you happy?”—“Yes.”—“And are you still as
happy?”—“Yes. And you?”
—“Then, more kisses!”—“Did I stop them, when a million
seemed so few?”
Hark, the dominant's persistence, till it must be answered to!

ix

So, an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised you, I dare
say!
“Brave Galuppi! that was music! good alike at grave and
gay!
I can always leave off talking when I hear a master play!”

X

Then they left you for their pleasure: till in due time, one by one,
 Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as well undone,
 Death stepped tacitly and took them where they never see the sun.

30

XI

But when I sit down to reason, think to take my stand nor swerve,
 While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's close reserve,
 In you come with your cold music, till I creep thro' every nerve.

XII

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a house was burned:
 "Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Venice spent what Venice earned.
 The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a soul can be discerned.

XIII

"Yours for instance: you know physics, something of geology, Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall rise in their degree; Butterflies may dread extinction,—you 'll not die, it cannot be!

XIV

"As for Venice and her people, merely born to bloom and drop,
 Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly were the crop:
 What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to stop?

40

XV

“Dust and ashes!” So you creak it, and I want the heart to
scold.
Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what's become of all
the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly and grown
old.

“DE GUSTIBUS—”

I

YOUR ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
 (If our loves remain)

In an English lane,
 By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
 Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—
 A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
 Making love, say,—
 The happier they !
 Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,
 And let them pass, as they will too soon,
 With the bean-flowers' boon,
 And the blackbird's tune,
 And May, and June !

10

II

What I love best in all the world
 Is a castle, precipice-encurled,
 In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.
 Or look for me, old fellow of mine,
 (If I get my head from out the mouth
 O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
 And come again to the land of lands)—
 In a sea-side house to the farther South,
 Where the baked cicala dies of drouth,
 And one sharp tree—'t is a cypress—stands,
 By the many hundred years red-rusted,
 Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrustèd,
 My sentinel to guard the sands
 To the water's edge. For, what expands

20

Before the house, but the great opaque
Blue breadth of sea without a break?
While, in the house, for ever crumbles
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles
Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
And says there's news to-day—the king
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling:
—She hopes they have not caught the felons.
Italy, my Italy!
Queen Mary's saying serves for me—
(When fortune's malice
Lost her, Calais)—
Open my heart and you will see
Graved inside of it, "Italy."
Such lovers old are I and she:
So it always was, so shall ever be!

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

I

O H, to be in England
 Now that April's there,
 And whoever wakes in England
 Sees, some morning, unaware,
 That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
 Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
 While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
 In England—now !

II

And after April, when May follows,
 And the white-throat builds, and all the swallows ! 10
 Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
 Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
 Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
 That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,
 Lest you should think he never could recapture
 The first fine careless rapture !
 And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
 All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
 The buttercups, the little children's dower
 —Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower ! 20

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA

NOBLY, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the North-west
died away;

Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz Bay;
Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay;
In the dimmest North-east distance dawned Gibraltar grand
and gray;

“Here and here did England help me: how can I help Eng-
land?”—say,

Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and pray,
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

SAUL

I

SAID Abner, "At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere thou speak,
 Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished it, and did kiss his cheek.
 And he, "Since the King, O my friend, for thy countenance sent,
 Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from his tent
 Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth yet,
 Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be wet.
 For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days,
 Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer nor of praise,
 To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their strife,
 And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back upon life.

10

II

" Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child with his dew
 On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living and blue
 Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no wild heat
 Were now raging to torture the desert!"

III

Then I, as was meet,
 Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my feet,
 And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was unlooped;
 I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I stooped;
 Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all withered and gone,
 That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my way on

Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once more I
prayed, 20

And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not afraid
But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no voice
replied.

At the first I saw naught but the blackness; but soon I descried
A something more black than the blackness—the vast, the
upright

Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and slow into sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all.
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent roof, showed Saul.

IV

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms stretched out
wide

On the great cross-support in the centre, that goes to each side;
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as, caught in his
pangs 30

And waiting his change, the king-serpent all heavily hangs,
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance come
With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul, drear and stark,
blind and dumb.

▼

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies we twine round its
chords

Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide—those sun-
beams like swords!

And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be done.

They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's bed
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows star 40
Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and so far!

VI

—Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland will each
leave his mate
To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets elate
Till for boldness they fight one another: and then, what has
weight
To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand house—
There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and half
mouse!
God made all the creatures and gave them our love and our
fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children, one family here.

VII

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-song,
when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and great
hearts expand 50
And grow one in the sense of this world's life.—And then, the
last song
When the dead man is praised on his journey—“Bear, bear
him along
With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets! Are balm-seeds
not here
To console us? The land has none left such as he on the bier.
Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!”—And then,
the glad chaunt
Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens, next, she whom
we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And then, the great
march
Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an arch
Nought can break; who shall harm them, our friends?—Then,
the chorus intoned
As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned. 60
But I stopped here: for here in the darkness Saul groaned.

VIII

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened apart;

And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered : and sparkles 'gan dart

From the jewels that woke in his turban, at once with a start,
All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at heart.
So the head : but the body still moved not, still hung there erect.
And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked,
As I sang,—

IX

“ Oh, our manhood’s prime vigour ! No spirit feels waste,

Not a muscle is stopped in its playing, nor sinew unbraced.

Oh, the wild joys of living ! the leaping from rock up to rock, 70
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver shock

Of the plunge in a pool’s living water, the hunt of the bear,
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.

And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust divine,

And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full draught of wine,

And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell
That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.

How good is man’s life, the mere living ! how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy !

Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword thou didst guard 80

When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious reward ?
Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up as men sung

The low song of the nearly-departed, and hear her faint tongue
Joining in while it could to the witness, ‘ Let one more attest,

I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a lifetime, and all was for best'?

Then they sung thro' their tears in strong triumph, not much, but the rest.

And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working whence grew

Such result as, from seething grape-bundles, the spirit strained true:

And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood of wonder and hope,

Present promise and wealth of the future beyond the eye's scope,—

90

Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine; And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one head combine!

On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage (like the throe

That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour and lets the gold go) High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning them,—all

Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King Saul!"

x

And lo, with that leap of my spirit,—heart, hand, harp and voice, Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding rejoice Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as when, dare I say, The Lord's army, in rapture of service, strains through its array,

100

And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—"Saul!" cried I, and stopped,

And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul, who hung propped

By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck by his name.

Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes right to the aim,

And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that held (he alone,
While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a broad bust of stone
A year's snow bound about for a breastplate,—leaves grasp of the sheet?
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down to his feet,
And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet, your mountain of old,
With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages untold— 110
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each furrow and scar
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—all hail, there they are!
—Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold the nest
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green on his crest
For their food in the ardours of summer. One long shudder thrilled
All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and was stilled
At the King's self left standing before me, released and aware.
What was gone, what remained? All to traverse 'twixt hope and despair.
Death was past, life not come: so he waited. Awhile his right hand
Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant forthwith to remand 120
To their place what new objects should enter: 't was Saul as before.
I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was hurt any more
Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch from the shore,
At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a sun's slow decline
Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap and entwine
Base with base to knit strength more intensely: so, arm folded arm
O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

xi

What spell or what charm,
 (For, awhile there was trouble within me) what next should I
 urge
 To sustain him where song had restored him?—Song filled to
 the verge
 His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it yields 130
 Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty: beyond, on what
 fields,
 Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten the eye
 And bring blood to the lip, and commend them the cup they
 put by?
 He saith, “It is good;” still he drinks not: he lets me praise
 life,
 Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

xii

Then fancies grew rife
 Which had come long ago on the pasture, when round me the
 sheep
 Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in sleep;
 And I lay in my hollow and mused on the world that might lie
 'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the hill and the
 sky:
 And I laughed—“Since my days are ordained to be passed
 with my flocks, 140
 Let me people at least, with my fancies, the plains and the
 rocks,
 Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the show
 Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall know!
 Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the courage that
 gains,
 And the prudence that keeps what men strive for.” And now
 these old trains

Of vague thought came again; I grew surer; so, once more the
string
Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus—

XIII

“ Yea, my King,”

I began—“ thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts that
spring

From the mere mortal life held in common by man and by brute:
In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul it bears
fruit.

Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—how its stem
trembled first

Till it passed the kid’s lip, the stag’s antler; then safely outburst
The fan-branches all round; and thou mindest when these too,
in turn

Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect: yet more was
to learn,

E’en the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our dates
shall we slight,

When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow? or care for the
plight

Of the palm’s self whose slow growth produced them? Not so!
stem and branch

Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the palm-wine
shall staunch

Every wound of man’s spirit in winter. I pour thee such wine.
Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for! the spirit be thine! 160
By the spirit, when age shall o’ercome thee, thou still shalt enjoy
More indeed, than at first when unconscious, the life of a boy.

Crush that life, and behold its wine running! Each deed thou
hast done

Dies, revives, goes to work in the world; until e’en as the sun
Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him, though
tempests efface,

Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must everywhere
trace

The results of his past summer-prime,—so, each ray of thy will,
 Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over, shall thrill
 Thy whole people, the countless, with ardour, till they too give
 forth
 A like cheer to their sons, who in turn, fill the South and the
 North
 With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse in the past !

170

But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at last:
 As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the rose at her height,
 So with man—so his power and his beauty for ever take flight.
 No! Again a long draught of my soul-wine! Look forth o'er
 the years!
 Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual; begin with the
 seer's!
 Is Saul dead? In the depth of the vale make his tomb—bid
 arise
 A grey mountain of marble heaped four-square, till, built to the
 skies,
 Let it mark where the great First King slumbers: whose fame
 would ye know?
 Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record shall
 go
 In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such was Saul, so he
 did;
 With the sages directing the work, by the populace chid,—
 For not half, they 'll affirm, is comprised there! Which fault
 to amend,
 In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon they shall
 spend
 (See, in tablets 't is level before them) their praise, and record
 With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,—the statesman's
 great word
 Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The river's
 a-wave
 With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when prophet-
 winds rave:

180

So the pen gives unborn generations their due and their part
 In thy being! Then, first of the mighty, thank God that thou
 art!"

190

xiv

And behold while I sang . . . but O Thou who didst grant
 me that day,
 And before it not seldom hast granted thy help to essay,
 Carry on and complete an adventure,—my shield and my
 sword
 In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word was my
 word,—
 Still be with me, who then at the summit of human endeavour
 And scaling the highest, man's thought could, gazed hopeless
 as ever
 On the new stretch of heaven above me—till, mighty to save,
 Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance—God's throne
 from man's grave!

Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my voice to my heart
 Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels last night I took
 part

200

As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my sheep,
 And still fear lest the terrible glory evanish like sleep!
 For I wake in the grey dewy covert, while Hebron upheaves
 The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and Kidron
 retrieves

Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

xv

I say then,—my song
 While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever more strong
 Made a proffer of good to console him—he slowly resumed
 His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right hand re-
 plumed

His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the swathes
 Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his countenance
 bathes,

210

He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins as of yore,

And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp set before.

He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had bent
The broad brow from the daily communion; and still, though much spent

Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God did choose,

To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite lose.
So sank he along by the tent-prop, till, stayed by the pile
Of his armour and war-cloak and garments, he leaned there awhile,

And sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent-prop, to raise

His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I touched on the praise

220

I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man patient there;
And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I was 'ware

That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast knees
Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak-roots which please

To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to know
If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke not, but slow

Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with care
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow: thro' my hair

The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head,
with kind power—

All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower. 230
Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinized mine—

And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where was the sign?

I yearned—“ Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss,
I would add, to that life of the past, both the future and this;

I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence,
 As this moment,—had love but the warrant, love's heart to
 dispense!"

xvi

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—no song
 more! outbroke—

xvii

" I have gone the whole round of creation: I saw and I spoke:
 I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my brain
 And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—returned him
 again

240

His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw:
 I report, as a man may of God's work—all 's love, yet all 's law.
 Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty tasked
 To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dewdrop was
 asked.

Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom laid bare.
 Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the Infinite
 Care!

Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?
 I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more and no less,
 In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God
 In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod. 250
 And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
 (With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too)
 The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-complete,
 As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet.
 Yet with all this abounding experience, this deity known,
 I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my own.
 There 's a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hoodwink,
 I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I think)
 Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst
 E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold, I could love if I durst! 260
 But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake
 God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain for love's sake.

—What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when doors
great and small,
Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth
appal?

In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of all?
Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt his own love can compete with it? Here, the
parts shift?

Here, the creature surpass the Creator,—the end, what Began?
Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,
And dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who yet alone
can?

270
Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less
power,

To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous dower
Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul,
Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole?
And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest)
These good things being given, to go on, and give one more,
the best?

Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the height
This perfection,—succeed with life's dayspring, death's minute
of night?

Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul the mistake,
Saul the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and bid him
awake

280
From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set
Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new harmony yet
To be run, and continued, and ended—who knows?—or
endure!

The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to make
sure;

By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss,
And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggles in
this.

XVIII

" I believe it ! "T is thou, God, that givest, 't is I who receive
 In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.
 All 's one gift : thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt to my
 prayer

As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the
 air. 290
 From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy dread
 Sabaoth :

*I will?—the mere atoms despise me ! Why am I not loth
 To look that, even that in the face too ? Why is it I dare
 Think but lightly of such impuissance ? What stops my
 despair ?*

This ;—'t is not what man Does which exalts him, but what
 man Would do !

See the King—I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall
 through.

Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,
 To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing
 which,

I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through me now !
 Would I suffer for him that I love ? So wouldst thou—so
 wilt thou ! 300

So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown—
 And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
 One spot for the creature to stand in ! It is by no breath,
 Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with
 death !

As thy love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
 Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved !
 He who did most, shall bear most ; the strongest shall stand the
 most weak.

"T is the weakness in strength, that I cry for ! my flesh, that I
 seek

In the Godhead ! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
 A Face like my face that receives thee ; a Man like to me, 310

Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand like this hand

Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!"

XIX

I know not too well how I found my way home in the night.
There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to right,
Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive, the aware:
I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strugglingly there,
As a runner beset by the populace famished for news—
Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed
with her crews;

And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and shot
Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge: but I fainted
not,

320

For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported, suppressed
All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy behest,
Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to rest.
Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from earth—
Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender birth;
In the gathered intensity brought to the grey of the hills;
In the shuddering forests' held breath; in the sudden wind-thrills;

In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eye sidling
still

Though averted with wonder and dread; in the birds stiff and
chill

That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid with
awe:

330

E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he felt the new law.
The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by the
flowers;

The same worked in the heart of the cedar and moved the vine-bowers:

And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent and low,
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices—"E'en so, it is so!"

MY STAR

ALL that I know
Of a certain star
Is, it can throw
(Like the angled spar)
Now a dart of red,
Now a dart of blue;
Till my friends have said
They would fain see, too,
My star that dartles the red and the blue!
Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furled: 10
They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.
What matter to me if their star is a world?
Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it

BY THE FIRE-SIDE

I

HOW well I know what I mean to do
 When the long dark autumn evenings come:
 And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?
 With the music of all thy voices, dumb
 In life's November too!

II

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
 O'er a great wise book, as beseemeth age,
 While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows,
 And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
 Not verse now, only prose!

10

III

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,
 "There he is at it, deep in Greek:
 Now then, or never, out we slip
 To cut from the hazels by the creek
 A mainmast for our ship!"

IV

I shall be at it indeed, my friends!
 Greek puts already on either side
 Such a branch-work forth as soon extends
 To a vista opening far and wide,
 And I pass out where it ends.

20

V

The outside-frame, like your hazel-trees—
 But the inside-archway widens fast,
 And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
 And we slope to Italy at last
 And youth, by green degrees.

VI

I follow wherever I am led,
 Knowing so well the leader's hand :
 Oh woman-country, woed not wed,
 Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,
 Laid to their hearts instead !

30

VII

Look at the ruined chapel again
 Half-way up in the Alpine gorge !
 Is that a tower, I point you plain,
 Or is it a mill, or an iron-forgé
 Breaks solitude in vain ?

VIII

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things ;
 The woods are round us, heaped and dim ;
 From slab to slab how it slips and springs,
 The thread of water single and slim,
 Through the ravage some torrent brings !

40

IX

Does it feed the little lake below ?
 That speck of white just on its marge
 Is Pella ; see, in the evening-glow,
 How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
 When Alp meets heaven in snow !

X

On our other side is the straight-up rock;
 And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it
 By boulder-stones where lichens mock
 The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
 Their teeth to the polished block.

50

XI

Oh the sense of the yellow mountain-flowers,
 And thorny balls, each three in one,
 The chestnuts throw on our path in showers!
 For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun,
 These early November hours,

XII

That crimson the creeper's leaf across
 Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,
 O'er a shield else gold from rim to boss,
 And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped
 Elf-needed mat of moss,

60

XIII

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
 Last evening—nay, in to-day's first dew
 Yon sudden coral nipple bulged,
 Where a freaked fawn-coloured flaky crew
 Of toad-stools peep indulged.

XIV

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge
 That takes the turn to a range beyond,
 Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge
 Where the water is stopped in a stagnant pond
 Danced over by the midge.

70

xv

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
 Blackish-grey and mostly wet;
 Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.
 See here again, how the lichens fret
 And the roots of the ivy strike!

xvi

Poor little place, where its one priest comes
 On a festa-day, if he comes at all,
 To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,
 Gathered within that precinct small
 By the dozen ways one roams—

80

xvii

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
 Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,
 Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,
 Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread
 Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

xviii

It has some pretension too, this front,
 With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise
 Set over the porch, Art's early wont:
 'T is John in the Desert, I surmise,
 But has borne the weather's brunt—

90

xix

Not from the fault of the builder, though,
 For a pent-house properly projects
 Where three carved beams make a certain show,
 Dating—good thought of our architect's—
 'Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

xx

And all day long a bird sings there,
 And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times;
 The place is silent and aware;
 It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,
 But that is its own affair.

100

xxi

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
 Oh heart, my own, oh eyes, mine too,
 Whom else could I dare look backward for,
 With whom beside should I dare pursue
 The path grey heads abhor?

xxii

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them;
 Youth, flowery all the way, there stops—
 Not they; age threatens and they contemn,
 Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,
 One inch from life's safe hem!

110

xxiii

With me, youth led . . . I will speak now,
 No longer watch you as you sit
 Reading by fire-light, that great brow
 And the spirit-small hand propping it,
 Mutely, my heart knows how—

xxiv

When, if I think but deep enough,
 You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme;
 And you, too, find without rebuff
 Response your soul seeks many a time
 Piercing its fine flesh-stuff.

120

xxv

My own, confirm me ! If I tread
 This path back, is it not in pride
 To think how little I dreamed it led
 To an age so blest that, by its side,
 Youth seems the waste instead ?

xxvi

My own, see where the years conduct !
 At first, 't was something our two souls
 Should mix as mists do ; each is sucked
 In each now : on, the new stream rolls,
 Whatever rocks obstruct.

13c

xxvii

Think, when our one soul understands
 The great Word which makes all things new,
 When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
 How will the change strike me and you
 In the house not made with hands ?

xxviii

Oh I must feel your brain prompt mine,
 Your heart anticipate my heart,
 You must be just before, in fine,
 See and make me see, for your part,
 New depths of the divine !

140

xxix

But who could have expected this
 When we two drew together first
 Just for the obvious human bliss,
 To satisfy life's daily thirst
 With a thing men seldom miss ?

XXX

Come back with me to the first of all,
 Let us lean and love it over again,
 Let us now forget and now recall,
 Break the rosary in a pearly rain,
 And gather what we let fall!

15c

XXXI

What did I say?—that a small bird sings
 All day long, save when a brown pair
 Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings
 Strained to a bell: 'gainst noon-day glare
 You count the streaks and rings.

XXXII

But at afternoon or almost eve
 'T is better; then the silence grows
 To that degree, you half believe
 It must get rid of what it knows,
 Its bosom does so heave.

160

XXXIII

Hither we walked then, side by side,
 Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,
 And still I questioned or replied,
 While my heart, convulsed to really speak,
 Lay choking in its pride.

XXXIV

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
 And pity and praise the chapel sweet,
 And care about the fresco's loss,
 And wish for our souls a like retreat,
 And wonder at the moss.

170

xxxv

Stoop and kneel on the settle under,
 Look through the window's grated square:
 Nothing to see! For fear of plunder,
 The cross is down and the altar bare,
 As if thieves don't fear thunder.

xxxvi

We stoop and look in through the grate,
 See the little porch and rustic door,
 Read duly the dead builder's date;
 Then cross the bridge that we crossed before,
 Take the path again—but wait!

180

xxxvii

Oh moment, one and infinite!
 The water slips o'er stock and stone;
 The West is tender, hardly bright:
 How grey at once is the evening grown—
 One star, its chrysolite!

xxxviii

We two stood there with never a third,
 But each by each, as each knew well:
 The sights we saw and the sounds we heard,
 The lights and the shades made up a spell
 Till the trouble grew and stirred.

190

xxxix

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
 And the little less, and what worlds away!
 How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
 Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
 And life be a proof of this!

XL

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen
 So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her:
 I could fix her face with a guard between,
 And find her soul as when friends confer,
 Friends—lovers that might have been.

200

XLI

For my heart had a touch of the woodland-time,
 Wanting to sleep now over its best.
 Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime,
 But bring to the last leaf no such test!
 "Hold the last fast!" runs the rhyme.

XLII

For a chance to make your little much,
 'To gain a lover and lose a friend,
 Venture the tree and a myriad such,
 When nothing you mar but the year can mend:
 But a last leaf—fear to touch!

210

XLIII

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall
 Eddying down till it find your face
 At some slight wind—best chance of all!
 Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-place
 You trembled to forestall!

XLIV

Worth how well, those dark grey eyes,
 That hair so dark and dear, how worth
 That a man should strive and agonize,
 And taste a veriest hell on earth
 For the hope of such a prize!

220

XLV

You might have turned and tried a man,
 Set him a space to weary and wear,
 And prove which suited more your plan,
 His best of hope or his worst despair,
 Yet end as he began.

XLVI

But you spared me this, like the heart you are,
 And filled my empty heart at a word.
 If two lives join, there is oft a scar,
 They are one and one, with a shadowy third;
 One near one is too far.

230

XLVII

A moment after, and hands unseen
 Were hanging the night around us fast;
 But we knew that a bar was broken between
 Life and life: we were mixed at last
 In spite of the mortal screen.

XLVIII

The forests had done it; there they stood;
 We caught for a moment the powers at play:
 They had mingled us so, for once and good,
 Their work was done—we might go or stay,
 They relapsed to their ancient mood.

240

XLIX

How the world is made for each of us!
 How all we perceive and know in it
 Tends to some moment's product thus,
 When a soul declares itself—to wit,
 By its fruit, the thing it does!

L

Be hate that fruit or love that fruit,
 It forwards the general deed of man,
 And each of the Many helps to recruit
 The life of the race by a general plan;
 Each living his own, to boot.

250

LI

I am named and known by that moment'sfeat;
 There took my station and degree;
 So grew my own small life complete,
 As nature obtained her best of me—
 One born to love you, sweet!

LII

And to watch you sink by the fire-side now
 Back again, as you mutely sit
 Musing by fire-light, that great brow
 And the spirit-small hand propping it,
 Yonder, my heart knows how!

260

LIII

So, earth has gained by one man the more,
 And the gain of earth must be heaven's gain too;
 And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
 When autumn comes: which I mean to do
 One day, as I said before.

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

I

I WONDER do you feel to-day
 As I have felt since, hand in hand,
 We sat down on the grass, to stray
 In spirit better through the land,
 This morn of Rome and May?

II

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
 Has tantalized me many times,
 (Like turns of thread the spiders throw
 Mocking across our path) for rhymes
 To catch at and let go.

10

III

Help me to hold it! First it left
 The yellowing fennel, run to seed
 There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
 Some old tomb's ruin: yonder weed
 Took up the floating weft,

IV

Where one small orange cup amassed
 Five beetles,—blind and green they grope
 Among the honey-meal: and last,
 Everywhere on the grassy slope
 I traced it. Hold it fast!

20

v

The champaign with its endless fleece
 Of feathery grasses everywhere!
 Silence and passion, joy and peace,
 An everlasting wash of air—
 Rome's ghost since her decease.

VI

Such life here, through such lengths of hours,
 Such miracles performed in play,
 Such primal naked forms of flowers,
 Such letting nature have her way
 While heaven looks from its towers!

30

VII

How say you? Let us, O my dove,
 Let us be unashamed of soul,
 As earth lies bare to heaven above!
 How is it under our control
 'To love or not to love?

VIII

I would that you were all to me,
 You that are just so much, no more.
 Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free!
 Where does the fault lie? What the core
 O' the wound, since wound must be?

40

IX

I would I could adopt your will,
 See with your eyes, and set my heart
 Beating by yours, and drink my fill
 At your soul's springs,—your part my part
 In life, for good and ill.

X

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,
Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose
And love it more than tongue can speak—
Then the good minute goes.

50

XI

Already how am I so far
Out of that minute? Must I go
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
Onward, whenever light winds blow,
Fixed by no friendly star?

XII

Just when I seemed about to learn!
Where is the thread now? Off again.
The old trick! Only I discern—
Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

60

LOVE IN A LIFE

I

ROOM after room,
I hunt the house through
We inhabit together.
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her—
Next time, herself!—not the trouble behind her
Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!
As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew:
Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

II

Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door; 10
I try the fresh fortune—
Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.
Spend my whole day in the quest,—who cares?
But 't is twilight, you see,—with such suites to explore,
Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune!

LIFE IN A LOVE

E SCAPE me?

Never—
Beloved!

While I am I, and you are you,
So long as the world contains us both,
Me the loving and you the loth,
While the one eludes, must the other pursue.
My life is a fault at last, I fear:

It seems too much like a fate, indeed!
Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed.
But what if I fail of my purpose here?
It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
And, baffled, get up and begin again,—

So the chace takes up one's life, that's all.
While, look but once from your farthest bound
At me so deep in the dust and dark,
No sooner the old hope goes to ground
Than a new one, straight to the self-same mark,
I shape me—
Ever
Removed!

10

20

MEMORABILIA

I

A H, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you,
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems and new!

II

But you were living before that,
And also you are living after;
And the memory I started at—
My starting moves your laughter!

III

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
And a certain use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
'Mid the blank miles round about:

10

IV

For there I picked up on the heather
And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather!
Well, I forgot the rest.

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA
(AN IMAGINARY COMPOSER)

I

HIST, but a word, fair and soft !
Forth and be judged, Master Hugues !
Answer the question I 've put you so oft :
What do you mean by your mountainous fugues ?
See, we 're alone in the loft,—

II

I, the poor organist here,
Hugues, the composer of note,
Dead though, and done with, this many a year :
Let 's have a colloquy, something to quote,
Make the world prick up its ear !

10

III

See, the church empties apace :
Fast they extinguish the lights.
Hallo there, sacristan ! Five minutes' grace !
Here 's a crank pedal wants setting to rights,
Baulks one of holding the base.

IV

See, our huge house of the sounds,
Hushing its hundreds at once,
Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds !
—O you may challenge them, not a response
Get the church-saints on their rounds !

20

▼

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt?
 —March, with the moon to admire,
 Up nave, down chancel, turn transept about,
 Supervise all betwixt pavement and spire,
 Put rats and mice to the rout—

VI

Aloys and Jurien and Just—
 Order things back to their place,
 Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks rust,
 Rub the church-plate, darn the sacrament lace,
 Clear the desk-velvet of dust.

30

VII

Here 's your book, younger folks shelve!
 Played I not off-hand and runningly,
 Just now, your masterpiece, hard number twelve?
 Here 's what should strike, could one handle it cunningly:
 Help the axe, give it a helve!

VIII

Page after page as I played,
 Every bar's rest, where one wipes
 Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and surveyed,
 O'er my three claviers, yon forest af pipes
 Whence you still peeped in the shade.

40

IX

Sure you were wishful to speak,
 You, with brow ruled like a score,
 Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek,
 Like two great breves, as they wrote them of yore,
 Each side that bar, your straight beak!

x

Sure you said—" Good, the mere notes !
 Still, couldst thou take my intent,
 Know what procured me our Company's votes—
 A master were lauded and sciolists shent,
 Parted the sheep from the goats ! "

50

xi

Well then, speak up, never flinch !
 Quick, ere my candle 's a snuff
 —Burnt, do you see ? to its uttermost inch—
 I believe in you, but that 's not enough :
 Give my conviction a clinch !

xii

First you deliver your phrase
 —Nothing propound, that I see,
 Fit in itsclf for much blame or much praise—
 Answered no less, where no answer needs be :
 Off start the Two on their ways.

60

xiii

Straight must a Third interpose,
 Volunteer needlessly help ;
 In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his nose,
 So the cry 's open, the kennel 's a-yelp,
 Argument 's hot to the close.

xiv

One dissertates, he is candid ;
 Two must discept,—has distinguished ;
 Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did ;
 Four protests ; Five makes a dart at the thing wished :
 Back to One, goes the case bandied.

70

xv

One says his say with a difference;
 More of expounding, explaining!
 All now is wrangle, abuse, and vociferance;
 Now there 's a truce, all 's subdued, self-restraining;
 Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

xvi

One is incisive, corrosive;
 Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant;
 Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive;
 Four overbears them all, strident and strepitant:
 Five . . . O Danaides, O Sieve!

80

xvii

Now, they ply axes and crowbars;
 Now, they prick pins at a tissue
 Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's
 Worked on the bone of a lie. To what issue?
 Where is our gain at the Two-bars?

xviii

Est fuga, volvitur rota.
 On we drift: where looms the dim port?
 One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute their quota;
 Something is gained, if one caught but the import—
 Show it us, Hugues of Saxe-Gotha!

90

xix

What with affirming, denying,
 Holding, risposting, subjoining,
 All 's like . . . it 's like . . . for an instance I 'm trying . . .
 There! See our roof, its gilt moulding and groining
 Under those spider-webs lying!

xx

So your fugue broadens and thickens,
 Greatens and deepens and lengthens,
 Till we exclaim—" But where 's music, the dickens ?
 Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web strengthens
 —Blacked to the stoutest of tickens ? "

100

xxi

I for man's effort am zealous :
 Prove me such censure unfounded !
 Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous—
 Hopes 't was for something, his organ-pipes sounded,
 Tiring three boys at the bellows ?

xxii

Is it your moral of Life ?
 Such a web, simple and subtle,
 Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,
 Backward and forward each throwing his shuttle,
 Death ending all with a knife ?

110

xxiii

Over our heads truth and nature—
 Still our life's zigzags and dodges,
 Ins and outs, weaving a new legislature—
 God's gold just shining its last where that lodges,
 Palled beneath man's usurpature.

xxiv

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,
 Cherub and trophy and garland ;
 Nothings grow something which quietly closes
 Heaven's earnest eye : not a glimpse of the far land
 Gets through our comments and glozes.

120

xxv

Ah but traditions, inventions,
 (Say we and make up a visage)
 So many men with such various intentions,
 Down the past ages, must know more than this age !
 Leave we the web its dimensions !

xxvi

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf,
 Proved a mere mountain in labour ?
 Better submit; try again; what 's the clef ?
 'Faith, 't is no trifle for pipe and for tabor—
 Four flats, the minor in F.

130

xxvii

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger:
 Learning it once, who would lose it ?
 Yet all the while a misgiving will linger,
 Truth 's golden o'er us although we refuse it—
 Nature, thro' cobwebs we string her.

xxviii

Hugues ! I advise *meā pānā*
 (Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)
 Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear the arena !
 Say the word, straight I unstop the full-organ,
 Blare out the *mode Palestrina*.

140

xxix

While in the roof, if I 'm right there,
 . . . Lo you, the wick in the socket !
 Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there !
 Down it dips, gone like a rocket.
 What, you want, do you, to come unawares,
 Sweeping the church up for first morning-prayers,
 And find a poor devil has ended his cares
 At the foot of your rotten-runged rat-riddled stairs ?
 Do I carry the moon in my pocket ?

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

I

YOU know, we French stormed Ratisbon:
A mile or so away
On a little mound, Napoleon
Stood on our storming-day;
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow
Oppressive with its mind.

II

Just as perhaps he mused " My plans
That soar, to earth may fall,
Let once my army-leader Lannes
Waver at yonder wall,"—
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping; nor bridle drew
Until he reached the mound.

10

III

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy:
You hardly could suspect—
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
Scarce any blood came through)
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
Was all but shot in two.

20

IV

“ Well,” cried he, “ Emperor, by God’s grace
We’ve got you Ratisbon !
The Marshal’s in the market-place,
And you ’ll be there anon
To see your flag-bird flap his vans
Where I, to heart’s desire, 30
Perched him ! ” The chief’s eye flashed ; his plans
Soared up again like fire.

V

The chief’s eye flashed ; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother-eagle’s eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes :
“ You ’re wounded ! ” “ Nay,” the soldier’s pride
Touched to the quick, he said :
“ I ’m killed, Sire ! ” And his chief beside,
Smiling the boy fell dead. 40

MY LAST DUCHESS

FERRARA

THAT 'S my last Duchess painted on the wall,
 Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will 't please you sit and look at her? I said
 "Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I) 10
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 't was not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat:" such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had 20
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 't was all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each

Would draw from her alike the approving speech, 30
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who 'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, “ Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark ”—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set 40
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We 'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence 50
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we 'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY

PIANO DI SORRENTO

FORTÙ, Fortù, my beloved one, sit here by my side,
On my knees put up both little feet! I was sure, if I tried,
I could make you laugh spite of Scirocco. Now, open your
eyes,
Let me keep you amused till he vanish in black from the skies,
With telling my memories over as you tell your beads;
All the Plain saw me gather, I garland—the flowers or the
weeds.
Time for rain! for your long hot dry Autumn had networked
with brown
The white skin of each grape on the bunches, marked like a
quail's crown,
Those creatures you make such account of, whose heads,—
speckled white
Over brown like a great spider's back, as I told you last
night,— 10
Your mother bites off for her supper. Red-ripe as could be,
Pomegranates were chapping and splitting in halves on the tree:
And betwixt the loose walls of great flintstone, or in the thick
dust
On the path, or straight out of the rock-side, wherever could
thrust
Some burnt sprig of bold hardy rock-flower its yellow face up,
For the prize were great butterflies fighting, some five for one
cup.
So, I guessed, ere I got up this morning, what change was in
store,
By the quick rustle-down of the quail-nets which woke me
before

I could open my shutter, made fast with a bough and a stone,
 And look thro' the twisted dead vine-twigs, sole lattice that's
 known. 20

Quick and sharp rang the rings down the net-poles, while, busy
 beneath,
 Your priest and his brother tugged at them, the rain in their
 teeth.

And out upon all the flat house-roofs, where split figs lay drying,
 The girls took the frails under cover: nor use seemed in trying
 To get out the boats and go fishing, for, under the cliff,
 Fierce the black water frothed o'er the blind-rock. No seeing
 our skiff

Arrive about noon from Amalfi,—our fisher arrive,
 And pitch down his basket before us, all trembling alive
 With pink and grey jellies, your sea-fruit; you touch the
 strange lumps,

And mouths gape there, eyes open, all manner of horns and of
 humps, 30
 Which only the fisher looks grave at, while round him like imps
 Cling screaming the children as naked and brown as his shrimps;
 Himself too as bare to the middle—you see round his neck
 The string and its brass coin suspended, that saves him from
 wreck.

But to-day not a boat reached Salerno, so back, to a man,
 Came our friends, with whose help in the vineyards grape-harvest
 began.

In the vat, halfway up in our house-side, like blood the juice
 spins,
 While your brother all bare-legged is dancing till breathless he
 grins

Dead-beaten in effort on effort to keep the grapes under,
 Since still when he seems all but master, in pours the fresh
 plunder 40

From girls who keep coming and going with basket on shoulder,
 And eyes shut against the rain's driving; your girls that are
 older,—

For under the hedges of aloe, and where, on its bed
 Of the orchard's black mould, the love-apple lies pulpy and red,

All the young ones are kneeling and filling their laps with the snails

Tempted out by this first rainy weather,—your best of regales, As to-night will be proved to my sorrow, when, supping in state, We shall feast our grape-gleaners (two dozen, three over one plate)

With lasagne so tempting to swallow in slippery ropes, And gourds fried in great purple slices, that colour of popes. 50 Meantime, see the grape bunch they 've brought you: the rain-water slips

O'er the heavy blue bloom on each globe which the wasp to your lips

Still follows with fretful persistence: nay, taste, while awake, This half of a curd-white smooth cheese-ball that peels, flake by flake,

Like an onion, each smoother and whiter; next, sip this weak wine

From the thin green glass flask, with its stopper, a leaf of the vine;

And end with the prickly-pear's red flesh that leaves thro' its juice

The stony black seeds on your pearl-teeth.

Scirocco is loose!

Hark, the quick, whistling pelt of the olives which, thick in one's track,

Tempt the stranger to pick up and bite them, tho' not yet half black! 60

How the old twisted olive trunks shudder, the medlars let fall Their hard fruit, and the brittle great fig-trees snap off, figs and all,

For here comes the whole of the tempest! no refuge, but creep Back again to my side and my shoulder, and listen or sleep.

O how will your country show next week, when all the vine-boughs

Have been stripped of their foliage to pasture the mules and the cows?

Last eve, I rode over the mountains; your brother, my guide,
Soon left me, to feast on the myrtles that offered, each side,
Their fruit-balls, black, glossy, and luscious,—or strip from the
sorbs

A treasure, or, rosy and wondrous, those hairy gold orbs! 70
But my mule picked his sure sober path out, just stopping to
neigh

When he recognized down in the valley his mates on their way
With the faggots and barrels of water; and soon we emerged
From the plain, where the woods could scarce follow; and still
as we urged

Our way, the woods wondered, and left us, as up still we trudged
Though the wild path grew wilder each instant, and place was
e'en grudged

'Mid the rock-chasms and piles of loose stones like the loose
broken teeth

Of some monster which climbed there to die from the ocean
beneath—

Place was grudged to the silver-grey fume-weed that clung to
the path,

And dark rosemary ever a-dying, that, 'spite the wind's wrath, 80
So loves the salt rock's face to seaward, and lentisks as staunch
To the stone where they root and bear berries, and . . . what
shows a branch

Coral-coloured, transparent, with circlets of pale seagreen leaves;
Over all trod my mule with the caution of gleaners o'er sheaves,
Still, foot after foot like a lady: so, round after round,
He climbed to the top of Calvano, and God's own profound
Was above me, and round me the mountains, and under, the sea,
And within me my heart to bear witness what was and shall be.
Oh, heaven and the terrible crystal! no rampart excludes
Your eye from the life to be lived in the blue solitudes. 90
Oh, those mountains, their infinite movement! still moving with
you;

For, ever some new head and breast of them thrusts into view
To observe the intruder; you see it if quickly you turn
And, before they escape you, surprise them: they grudge you
should learn

How the soft plains they look on, lean over and love (they pretend)

—Cower beneath them, the flat sea-pine crouches, the wild fruit-trees bend,

E'en the myrtle-leaves curl, shrink and shut: all is silent and grave:

"T is a sensual and timorous beauty, how fair! but a slave.

So, I turned to the sea; and there slumbered as greenly as ever

Those isles of the siren, your Galli; no ages can sever 100

The Three, nor enable their sister to join them,—halfway

On the voyage, she looked at Ulysses—no farther to-day,

Tho' the small one, just launched in the wave, watches breast-high and steady

From under the rock, her bold sister swum halfway already.

Fortù, shall we sail there together, and see from the sides

Quite new rocks show their faces, new haunts where the siren abides?

Shall we sail round and round them, close over the rocks, tho' unseen,

That ruffle the grey glassy water to glorious green?

Then scramble from splinter to splinter, reach land and explore, On the largest, the strange square black turret with never a door, 110

Just a loop to admit the quick lizards; then, stand there and hear

The birds' quiet singing, that tells us what life is, so clear?

—The secret they sang to Ulysses when, ages ago,

He heard and he knew this life's secret I hear and I know.

Ah, see! The sun breaks o'er Calvano; he strikes the great gloom

And flutters it o'er the mount's summit in airy gold fume.

All is over. Look out, see the gipsy, our tinker and smith, Has arrived, set up bellows and forge, and down-squatted forthwith

To his hammering, under the wall there; one eye keeps aloof

The urchins that itch to be putting his jews'-harps to proof, 120

While the other, thro' locks of curled wire, is watching how sleek
 Shines the hog, come to share in the windfall—an abbot's
 own cheek!

All is over. Wake up and come out now, and down let us go,
 And see the fine things got in order at church for the show
 Of the Sacrament, set forth this evening. To-morrow's the
 Feast

Of the Rosary's Virgin, by no means of Virgins the least,
 As you 'll hear in the off-hand discourse which (all nature, no
 art)

The Dominican brother, these three weeks, was getting by heart.
 Not a pillar nor post but is dizened with red and blue papers;
 All the roof waves with ribbons, each altar a-blaze with long
 tapers;

130

But the great masterpiece is the scaffold rigged glorious to hold
 All the fiddlers and fifers and drummers and trumpeters bold,
 Not afraid of Bellini nor Auber, who, when the priest 's hoarse,
 Will strike us up something that 's brisk for the feast's second
 course.

And then will the flaxen-wigged Image be carried in pomp
 Thro' the plain, while in gallant procession, the priests mean to
 stomp.

All round the glad church lie old bottles with gunpowder
 stopped,

Which will be, when the Image re-enters, religiously popped;
 And at night from the crest of Calvano great bonfires will hang,
 On the plain will the trumpets join chorus, and more poppers
 bang.

140

At all events, come—to the garden, as far as the wall;
 See me tap with a hoe on the plaster till out there shall fall
 A scorpion with wide angry nippers!

—“ Such trifles! ” you say?

Fortù, in my England at home, men meet gravely to-day
 And debate, if abolishing Corn-laws be righteous and wise
 —If 't were proper, Scirocco should vanish in black from the
 skies!

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

I

I SAID—Then, dearest, since 't is so,
 Since now at length my fate I know,
 Since nothing all my love avails,
 Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,
 Since this was written and needs must be—
 My whole heart rises up to bless
 Your name in pride and thankfulness !
 Take back the hope you gave,—I claim
 Only a memory of the same,
 —And this beside, if you will not blame,
 Your leave for one more last ride with me.

10

II

My mistress bent that brow of hers ;
 Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
 When pity would be softening through,
 Fixed me a breathing-while or two
 With life or death in the balance : right !
 The blood replenished me again ;
 My last thought was at least not vain :
 I and my mistress, side by side
 Shall be together, breathe and ride,
 So, one day more am I deified.

20

Who knows but the world may end to-night ?

III

Hush ! if you saw some western cloud
 All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
 By many benedictions—sun's

And moon's and evening star's at once—
 And so, you, looking and loving best,
 Conscious grew, your passion drew
 Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
 Down on you, near and yet more near,
 Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!—
 Thus leant she and lingered—joy and fear!
 Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

30

IV

Then we began to ride. My soul
 Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
 Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
 Past hopes already lay behind.

What need to strive with a life awry?
 Had I said that, had I done this,
 So might I gain, so might I miss.
 Might she have loved me? just as well
 She might have hated, who can tell!
 Where had I been now if the worst befell?
 And here we are riding, she and I.

40

▼

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
 Why, all men strive and who succeeds?
 We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,
 Saw other regions, cities new,
 As the world rushed by on either side.
 I thought,—All labour, yet no less
 Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
 Look at the end of work, contrast
 The petty done, the undone vast,
 This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
 I hoped she would love me; here we ride.

50

VI

What hand and brain went ever paired?
 What heart alike conceived and dared?
 What act proved all its thought had been?
 What will but felt the fleshly screen?

We ride and I see her bosom heave.

60

There 's many a crown for who can reach.
 Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
 The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
 A soldier's doing! what atones?
 They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
 My riding is better, by their leave.

VII

What does it all mean, poet? Well,
 Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
 What we felt only; you expressed
 You hold things beautiful the best,

70

And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.
 'T is something, nay 't is much: but then,
 Have you yourself what 's best for men?
 Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—
 Nearer one whit your own sublime
 Than we who never have turned a rhyme?
 Sing, riding 's a joy! For me, I ride.

VIII

And you, great sculptor—so, you gave
 A score of years to Art, her slave,
 And that 's your Venus, whence we turn
 To yonder girl that fords the burn!

80

You acquiesce, and shall I repine?
 What, man of music, you grown grey
 With notes and nothing else to say,

Is this your sole praise from a friend,
 "Greatly his opera's strains intend,
 But in music we know how fashions end!"
 I gave my youth; but we ride, in fine.

IX

Who knows what 's fit for us? Had fate
 Proposed bliss here should sublimate
 My being—had I signed the bond—
 Still one must lead some life beyond,
 Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
 This foot once planted on the goal,
 This glory-garland round my soul,
 Could I descry such? Try and test!
 I sink back shuddering from the quest.
 Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
 Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

90

X

And yet—she has not spoke so long!
 What if heaven be that, fair and strong
 At life's best, with our eyes upturned
 Whither life's flower is first discerned,
 We, fixed so, ever should so abide?
 What if we still ride on, we two,
 With life for ever old yet new,
 Changed not in kind but in degree,
 The instant made eternity,—
 And heaven just prove that I and she
 Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

100

110

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

(Shortly after the Revival of Learning in Europe)

LET us begin and carry up this corpse,
 Singing together.
 Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes,
 Each in its tether
 Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,
 Cared-for till cock-crow:
 Look out if yonder be not day again
 Rimming the rock-row!
 That 's the appropriate country; there, man's thought,
 Rarer, intenser, 10
 Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,
 Chafes in the censer.
 Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop;
 Seek we sepulture
 On a tall mountain, citied to the top,
 Crowded with culture!
 All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels;
 Clouds overcome it;
 No! yonder sparkle is the citadel's
 Circling its summit. 20
 Thither our path lies; wind we up the heights:
 Wait ye the warning?
 Our low life was the level's and the night's:
 He 's for the morning.
 Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head,
 'Ware the beholders!
 This is our master, famous, calm and dead,
 Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd ! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,
 Safe from the weather ! 30
 He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
 Singing together,
 He was a man born with thy face and throat,
 Lyric Apollo !
 Long he lived nameless : how should spring take note
 Winter would follow ?
 Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone !
 Cramped and diminished,
 Moaned he, " New measures, other feet anon !
 My dance is finished ? " 40
 No, that 's the world's way ! (keep the mountain-side,
 Make for the city !)
 He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride
 Over men's pity ;
 Left play for work, and grappled with the world
 Bent on escaping :
 " What 's in the scroll," quoth he, " thou keepest furled ?
 Show me their shaping,
 Theirs who most studied man, the bard and sage,—
 Give ! "—So, he gowned him, 50
 Straight got by heart that book to its last page :
 Learned, we found him.
 Yea, but we found him bald too, eyes like lead,
 Accents uncertain :
 " Time to taste life," another would have said,
 " Up with the curtain ! "
 This man said rather, " Actual life comes next ?
 Patience a moment !
 Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,
 Still there 's the comment. 60
 Let me know all ! Prate not of most or least,
 Painful or easy !
 Even to the crumbs I 'd fain eat up the feast,
 Ay, nor feel queasy."
 Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,
 When he had learned it,

When he had gathered all books had to give !
 Sooner, he spurned it.

Image the whole, then execute the parts—
 Fancy the fabric

Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,
 Ere mortar dab brick !

(Here 's the town-gate reached : there 's the market-place
 Gaping before us.)

Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace
 (Hearten our chorus !)

That before living he 'd learn how to live—
 No end to learning :

Earn the means first—God surely will contrive
 Use for our earning.

Others mistrust and say, " But time escapes !
 Live now or never ! "

He said, " What 's time ? Leave Now for dogs and apes !
 Man has Forever."

Back to his book then : deeper drooped his head :
Calculus racked him :

Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead :
Tussis attacked him.

" Now, master, take a little rest ! "—not he !
 (Caution redoubled !)

Step two abreast, the way winds narrowly !
 Not a whit troubled,

Back to his studies, fresher than at first,
 Fierce as a dragon

He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)
 Sucked at the flagon.

Oh, if we draw a circle prematu.e,
 Heedless of far gain,

Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure
 Bad is our bargain !

Was it not great ? did not he throw on God
 (He loves the burthen)—

God's task to make the heavenly period
 Perfect the earthen ?

Did not he magnify the mind, show clear
Just what it all meant?

He would not discount life, as fools do here,
Paid by instalment.

He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success
Found, or earth's failure:

“Wilt thou trust death or not?” He answered “Yes!
Hence with life's pale lure!”

That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it:

This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.

That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred's soon hit:

This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit.

That, has the world here—should he need the next,
Let the world mind him!

This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
Seeking shall find him.

So, with the throttling hands of death at strife,
Ground he at grammar;

Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife:
While he could stammer

He settled *Hosi*'s business—let it be!—
Properly based *Oun*—

Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
Dead from the waist down.

Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place:
Hail to your purlieus,

All ye highfliers of the feathered race,
Swallows and curlews!

Here's the top-peak; the multitude below
Live, for they can, there:

This man decided not to Live but Know—
Bury this man there?

Here—here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,
Lightnings are loosened,

110

120

130

140

Stars come and go! Let joy break with the storm,
Peace let the dew send!
Lofty designs must close in like effects:
Loftily lying,
Leave him—still loftier than the world suspects,
Living and dying.

HOLY-CROSS DAY

ON WHICH THE JEWS WERE FORCED TO ATTEND AN
ANNUAL CHRISTIAN SERMON IN ROME

[“Now was come about Holy-Cross Day, and now must my lord preach his first sermon to the Jews: as it was of old cared for in the merciful bowels of the Church, that, so to speak, a crumb at least from her conspicuous table here in Rome, should be, though but once yearly, cast to the famishing dogs, undertrampled and bespitten-upon beneath the feet of the guests. And a moving sight in truth, this, of so many of the besotted, blind, restif and ready-to-perish Hebrews! now maternally brought—nay, (for He saith, ‘Compel them to come in’) haled, as it were, by the head and hair, and against their obstinate hearts, to partake of the heavenly grace. What awakening, what striving with tears, what working of a yeasty conscience! Nor was my lord wanting to himself on so apt an occasion; witness the abundance of conversions which did incontinently reward him: though not to my lord be altogether the glory.”—*Diary by the Bishop’s Secretary, 1600.*]

What the Jews really said, on thus being driven to church, was rather to this effect:—

I

FEE, faw, fum! bubble and squeak!
Blessedest Thursday’s the fat of the week.
Rumble and tumble, sleek and rough,
Stinking and savoury, smug and gruff,
Take the church-road, for the bell’s due chime
Gives us the summons—’t is sermon-time!

II

Boh, here 's Barnabas ! Job, that 's you ?
 Up stumps Solomon—bustling too ?
 Shame, man ! greedy beyond your years
 To handsel the bishop's shaving-shears ?
 Fair play 's a jewel ! Leave friends in the lurch ?
 Stand on a line ere you start for the church !

10

III

Higgledy piggledy, packed we lie,
 Rats in a hamper, swine in a sty,
 Wasps in a bottle, frogs in a sieve,
 Worms in a carcase, fleas in a sleeve.
 Hist ! square shoulders, settle your thumbs
 And buzz for the bishop—here he comes.

IV

Bow, wow, wow,—a bone for the dog !
 I liken his Grace to an acorned hog.
 What, a boy at his side, with the bloom of a lass,
 To help and handle my lord's hour-glass !
 Didst ever behold so lithe a chine ?
 His cheek hath laps like a fresh-singed swine.

20

V

Aaron 's asleep—shove hip to haunch,
 Or somebody deal him a dig in the paunch !
 Look at the purse with the tassel and knob,
 And the gown with the angel and thingumbob !
 What 's he at, quotha ? reading his text !
 Now you 've his curtsey—and what comes next ?

30

VI

See to our converts—you doomed black dozen—
 No stealing away—nor cog nor cozen !

You five, that were thieves, deserve it fairly;
 You seven, that were beggars, will live less sparingly;
 You took your turn and dipped in the hat,
 Got fortune—and fortune gets you; mind that!

VII

Give your first groan—compunction's at work;
 And soft! from a Jew you mount to a Turk.
 Lo, Micah,—the selfsame beard on chin
 He was four times already converted in!
 Here's a knife, clip quick—it's a sign of grace—
 Or he ruins us all with his hanging-face.

40

VIII

Whom now is the bishop a-leering at?
 I know a point where his text falls pat.
 I'll tell him to-morrow, a word just now
 Went to my heart and made me vow
 I meddle no more with the worst of trades—
 Let somebody else pay his serenades.

IX

Groan all together now, whee—hee—hee!
 It's a-work, it's a-work, ah, woe is me!
 It began, when a herd of us, picked and placed,
 Were spurred through the Corso, stripped to the waist;
 Jew brutes, with sweat and blood well spent
 To usher in worthily Christian Lent.

50

X

It grew, when the hangman entered our bounds,
 Yelled, pricked us out to his church like hounds:
 It got to a pitch, when the hand indeed
 Which gutted my purse, would throttle my creed:
 And it overflows, when, to even the odd,
 Men I helped to their sins, help me to their God.

60

xi

But now, while the scapegoats leave our flock,
 And the rest sit silent and count the clock,
 Since forced to muse the appointed time
 On these precious facts and truths sublime,—
 Let us fitly employ it, under our breath,
 In saying Ben Ezra's Song of Death.

xii

For Rabbi Ben Ezra, the night he died,
 Called sons and sons' sons to his side,
 And spoke, " This world has been harsh and strange ;
 Something is wrong : there needeth a change. 70
 But what, or where ? at the last or first ?
 In one point only we sinned, at worst.

xiii

" The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,
 And again in his border see Israel set.
 When Judah beholds Jerusalem,
 The stranger-seed shall be joined to them :
 To Jacob's House shall the Gentiles cleave.
 So the Prophet saith and his sons believe.

xiv

" Ay, the children of the chosen race
 Shall carry and bring them to their place : 80
 In the land of the Lord shall lead the same,
 Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall blame,
 When the slaves enslave, the oppressed ones o'er
 The oppressor triumph for evermore ?

xv

" God spoke, and gave us the word to keep :
 Bade never fold the hands nor sleep

'Mid a faithless world,—at watch and ward,
Till Christ at the end relieve our guard.
By His servant Moses the watch was set:
Though near upon cock-crow, we keep it yet.

90

xvi

"Thou! if thou wast He, who at mid-watch came,
By the starlight, naming a dubious name!
And if, too heavy with sleep—too rash
With fear,—O thou, if that martyr-gash
Fell on thee coming to take thine own,
And we gave the Cross, when we owed the Throne—

xvii

"Thou art the Judge. We are bruised thus.
But, the judgment over, join sides with us!
Thine too is the cause! and not more thine
Than ours, is the work of these dogs and swine,
Whose life laughs through and spits at their creed!
Who maintain thee in word, and defy thee in deed!

100

xviii

"We withheld Christ then? Be mindful how
At least we withstand Barabbas now!
Was our outrage sore? But the worst we spared,
To have called these—Christians, had we dared!
Let defiance to them pay mistrust of thee,
And Rome make amends for Calvary!

xix

"By the torture, prolonged from age to age,
By the infamy, Israel's heritage,
By the Ghetto's plague, by the garb's disgrace,
By the badge of shame, by the felon's place,
By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,
And the summons to Christian fellowship,—

110

xx

“ We boast our proof that at least the Jew
Would wrest Christ’s name from the Devil’s crew.
Thy face took never so deep a shade
But we fought them in it, God our aid!
A trophy to bear, as we march, thy band,
South, East, and on to the Pleasant Land ! ”

120

(Pope Gregory XVI abolished this bad business of the Sermon.—R. B.)

THE STATUE AND THE BUST

THERE 'S a palace in Florence, the world knows well,
And a statue watches it from the square,
And this story of both do our townsmen tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,
At the farthest window facing the East
Asked, " Who rides by with the royal air ? "

The brides-maids' prattle around her ceased ;
She leaned forth, one on either hand ;
They saw how the blush of the bride increased —

They felt by its beats her heart expand —
As one at each ear and both in a breath
Whispered, " The Great-Duke Ferdinand. "

That selfsame instant, underneath,
The Duke rode past in his idle way,
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,
Till he threw his head back — " Who is she ? "
— " A Bride the Riccardi brings home to-day. "

Hair in heaps lay heavily
Over a pale brow spirit-pure —
Carved like the heart of the coal-black tree,

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure —
And vainly sought to dissemble her eyes
Of the blackest black our eyes endure.

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man, —
The Duke grew straightway brave and wise.

10

20

He looked at her, as a lover can;
 She looked at him, as one who awakes:
 The past was a sleep, and her life began.

30

Now, love so ordered for both their sakes,
 A feast was held that selfsame night
 In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,
 But the Palace overshadows one,
 Because of a crime which may God requite!

To Florence and God the wrong was done,
 Through the first republic's murder there
 By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

The Duke (with the statue's face in the square) 40
 Turned in the midst of his multitude
 At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood
 A single minute and no more,
 While the bridegroom bent as a man subdued—

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor—
 For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred,
 As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word?
 If a word did pass, which I do not think,
 Only one out of the thousand heard. 50

That was the bridegroom. At day's brink
 He and his bride were alone at last
 In a bed-chamber by a taper's blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,
 That the door she had passed was shut on her
 Till the final catafalque repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,
 Through a certain window facing the East
 She could watch like a convent's chronicler. 60

Since passing the door might lead to a feast,
And a feast might lead to so much beside,
He, of many evils, chose the least.

“ Freely I choose too,” said the bride—
“ Your window and its world suffice,”
Replied the tongue, while the heart replied—
“ If I spend the night with that devil twice,
May his window serve as my loop of hell
Whence a damned soul looks on paradise !

“ I fly to the Duke who loves me well,
Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow
Ere I count another ave-bell.

70

“ ’T is only the coat of a page to borrow,
And tie my hair in a horse-boy’s trim,
And I save my soul—but not to-morrow”—

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim)
“ My father tarries to bless my state:
I must keep it one day more for him.

“ Is one day more so long to wait?
Moreover the Duke rides past, I know;
We shall see each other, sure as fate.”

80

She turned on her side and slept. Just so!
So we resolve on a thing and sleep;
So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, “ Dear or cheap
As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove
To body or soul, I will drain it deep.”

And on the morrow, bold with love,
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on call,
As his duty bade, by the Duke’s alcove)

90

And smiled, “ ’T was a very funeral,
Your lady will think, this feast of ours,—
A shame to efface, whate’er befall !

“ What if we break from the Arno bowers,
 And try if Petraja, cool and green,
 Cure last night’s fault with this morning’s flowers ? ”

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen
 On his steady brow and quiet mouth,
 Said, “ Too much favour for me so mean !

“ But, alas ! my lady leaves the South ;
 Each wind that comes from the Apennine
 Is a menace to her tender youth :

“ Nor a way exists, the wise opine,
 If she quits her palace twice this year,
 To avert the flower of life’s decline.”

Quoth the Duke, “ A sage and a kindly fear.
 Moreover Petraja is cold this spring :
 Be our feast to-night as usual here ! ”

And then to himself—“ Which night shall bring
 Thy bride to her lover’s embraces, fool—
 Or I am the fool, and thou art the king !

“ Yet my passion must wait a night, nor cool—
 For to-night the Envoy arrives from France,
 Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my tool.

“ I need thee still and might miss perchance.
 To-day is not wholly lost, beside,
 With its hope of my lady’s countenance :

“ For I ride—what should I do but ride ?
 And passing her palace, if I list,
 May glance at its window—well betide ! ”

So said, so done : nor the lady missed
 One ray that broke from the ardent brow,
 Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow,
 No morrow’s sun should arise and set
 And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,
 With still fresh cause to wait one day more
 Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love's brief morning wore,
 With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,
 They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly,
 But not in despite of heaven and earth:
 The rose would blow when the storm passed by.

Meantime they could profit in winter's dearth
 By store of fruits that supplant the rose:
 The world and its ways have a certain worth:

And to press a point while these oppose
 Were simple policy; better wait:
 We lose no friends and we gain no foes.

Meantime, worse fates than a lover's fate,
 Who daily may ride and pass and look
 Where his lady watches behind the grate!

And she—she watched the square like a book
 Holding one picture and only one,
 Which daily to find she undertook:

When the picture was reached the book was done,
 And she turned from the picture at night to scheme
 Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

So weeks grew months, years; gleam by gleam
 The glory dropped from their youth and love,
 And both perceived they had dreamed a dream;

Which hovered as dreams do, still above:
 But who can take a dream for a truth?
 Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove!

One day as the lady saw her youth
 Depart, and the silver thread that streaked
 Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth,

130

140

150

The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked,— 160
 And wondered who the woman was,
 Hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,
 Fronting her silent in the glass—
 “ Summon here,” she suddenly said,
 “ Before the rest of my old self pass,
 “ Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,
 Who fashions the clay no love will change,
 And fixes a beauty never to fade.
 “ Let Robbia’s craft so apt and strange
 Arrest the remains of young and fair, 170
 And rivet them while the seasons range.
 “ Make me a face on the window there,
 Waiting as ever, mute the while,
 My love to pass below in the square !
 “ And let me think that it may beguile
 Dreary days which the dead must spend
 Down in their darkness under the aisle,
 “ To say, ‘ What matters it at the end ?
 I did no more while my heart was warm
 Than does that image, my pale-faced friend.’ 180
 “ Where is the use of the lip’s red charm,
 The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,
 And the blood that blues the inside arm—
 “ Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,
 The earthly gift to an end divine ?
 A lady of clay is as good, I trow.”
 But long ere Robbia’s cornice, fine,
 With flowers and fruits which leaves enlace,
 Was set where now is the empty shrine—
 (And, leaning out of a bright blue space, 190
 As a ghost might lean from a chink of sky,
 The passionate pale lady’s face—

Eyeing ever, with earnest eye
 And quick-turned neck at its breathless stretch,
 Some one who ever is passing by—)

The Duke had sighed like the simplest wretch
 In Florence, “ Youth—my dream escapes !
 Will its record stay ? ” And he bade them fetch

Some subtle moulder of brazen shapes—
 “ Can the soul, the will, die out of a man
 Ere his body find the grave that gapes ? ”

200

“ John of Douay shall effect my plan,
 Set me on horseback here aloft,
 Alive, as the crafty sculptor can,

“ In the very square I have crossed so oft:
 That men may admire, when future suns
 Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

“ While the mouth and the brow stay brave in bronze—
 Admire and say, ‘ When he was alive
 How he would take his pleasure once ! ’

210

“ And it shall go hard but I contrive
 To listen the while, and laugh in my tomb
 At idleness which aspires to strive.”

So ! While these wait the trump of doom,
 How do their spirits pass, I wonder,
 Nights and days in the narrow room ?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder
 What a gift life was, ages ago,
 Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Only they see not God, I know,
 Nor all that chivalry of his,
 The soldier-saints who, row on row,

220

Burn upward each to his point of bliss—
Since, the end of life being manifest,
He had burned his way thro' the world to this.

I hear you reproach, “ But delay was best,
For their end was a crime.”—Oh, a crime will do
As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

As a virtue golden through and through,
Sufficient to vindicate itself
And prove its worth at a moment's view !

230

Must a game be played for the sake of pelf?
Where a button goes, 't were an epigram
To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the sham :
As well the counter as coin, I submit,
When your table 's a hat, and your prize a dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,
Venture as warily, use the same skill,
Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

240

If you choose to play !—is my principle.
Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will !

The counter our lovers staked was lost
As surely as if it were lawful coin :
And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost

Is—the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.
You of the virtue (we issue join)
How strive you ? *De se, fabula !*

250

“ CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK
TOWER CAME ”

(See Edgar's song in “ Lear ”)

I

MY first thought was, he lied in every word,
That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
Askance to watch the working of his lie
On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored
Its edge, at one more victim gained thereby.

II

What else should he be set for, with his staff?
What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare
All travellers who might find him posted there,
And ask the road? I guessed what skull-like laugh
Would break, what crutch 'gin write my epitaph
For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

10

III

If at his counsel I should turn aside
Into that ominous tract which, all agree,
Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly
I did turn as he pointed: neither pride
Nor hope rekindling at the end desried,
So much as gladness that some end might be.

IV

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,
 What with my search drawn out thro' years, my hope 20
 Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
 With that obstreperous joy success would bring,—
 I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
 My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

▼

As when a sick man very near to death
 Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end
 The tears and takes the farewell of each friend,
 And hears one bid the other go, draw breath
 Freelier outside, ("since all is o'er," he saith,
 "And the blow fallen no grieving can amend;") 30

VI

While some discuss if near the other graves
 Be room enough for this, and when a day
 Suits best for carrying the corpse away,
 With care about the banners, scarves and staves:
 And still the man hears all, and only craves
 He may not shame such tender love and stay.

VII

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
 Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
 So many times among "The Band"—to wit,
 The knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed 40
 Their steps—that just to fail as they, seemed best,
 And all the doubt was now—should I be fit?

VIII

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
 That hateful cripple, out of his highway
 Into the path he pointed. All the day
 Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
 Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
 Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.

IX

For mark! no sooner was I fairly found
 Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,
 Than, pausing to throw backward a last view 50
 O'er the safe road, 't was gone; grey plain all round:
 Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
 I might go on; nought else remained to do.

X

So, on I went. I think I never saw
 Such starved ignoble nature; nothing thrrove:
 For flowers—as well expect a cedar grove!
 But cockle, spurge, according to their law
 Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,
 You 'd think; a burr had been a treasure trove. 60

XI

No! penury, inertness and grimace,
 In some strange sort, were the land's portion. " See
 Or shut your eyes," said Nature peevishly,
 " It nothing skills: I cannot help my case:
 "T is the Last Judgment's fire must cure this place,
 Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free."

xii

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk
 Above its mates, the head was chopped; the bents
 Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents
 In the dock's harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to baulk 70
 All hope of greenness? 't is a brute must walk
 Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

xiii

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
 In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked the mud
 Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.
 One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
 Stood stupefied, however he came there:
 Thrust out past service from the devil's stud!

xiv

Alive? he might be dead for aught I know,
 With that red gaunt and colloped neck a-strain, 80
 And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane;
 Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe;
 I never saw a brute I hated so;
 He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

xv

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.
 As a man calls for wine before he fights,
 I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights,
 Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
 Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's art:
 One taste of the old time sets all to rights. 90

XVI

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
That way he used. Alas, one night's disgrace!
Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold

XVII

XVIII

Better this present than a past like that;
Back therefore to my darkening path again!
No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.
Will the night send a howlet or a bat?
I asked: when something on the dismal flat
Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.

• KIX

A sudden little river crossed my path
As unexpected as a serpent comes.
No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms;
This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath
For the fiend's glowing hoof—to see the wrath
Of its black eddy bespate with flakes and spumes.

xx

So petty yet so spiteful! All along,
 Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it;
 Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit
 Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:
 The river which had done them all the wrong,
 Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit.

120

xxi

Which, while I forded,—good saints, how I feared
 To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
 Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek
 For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!
 —It may have been a water-rat I speared,
 But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

xxii

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.
 Now for a better country. Vain presage!
 Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage
 Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank
 Soil to a splash? Toads in a poisoned tank,
 Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage—

130

xxiii

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.
 What penned them there, with all the plain to choose?
 No foot-print leading to that horrid mews,
 None out of it. Mad brewage set to work
 Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves the Turk
 Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.

xxiv

And more than that—a furlong on—why, there !

What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,
Or brake, not wheel—that harrow fit to reel
Men's bodies out like silk ? with all the air
Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

140

xxv

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood,
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth
Desperate and done with; (so a fool finds mirth,
Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood
Changes and off he goes !) within a rood—
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black dearth.

150

xxvi

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay and grim,
Now patches where some leanness of the soil 's
Broke into moss or substances like boils;
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

xxvii

And just as far as ever from the end !

Nought in the distance but the evening, nought
To point my footstep further ! At the thought,
A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend,
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned
That brushed my cap—perchance the guide I sought.

160

XXVIII

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,
 'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place
 All round to mountains—with such name to grace
 Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen in view.
 How thus they had surprised me,—solve it, you !
 How to get from them was no clearer case.

XXIX

Yet half I seemed to recognize some trick
 Of mischief happened to me, God knows when—
 In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended, then,
 Progress this way. When, in the very nick
 Of giving up, one time more, came a click
 As when a trap shuts—you're inside the den !

170

XXX

Burningly it came on me all at once,
 This was the place ! those two hills on the right,
 Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight ;
 While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . . Dunce,
 Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,
 After a life spent training for the sight !

180

XXXI

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself ?
 The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,
 Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
 In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf
 Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf
 He strikes on, only when the timbers start.

XXXII

Not see? because of night perhaps?—why, day
 Came back again for that! before it left,
 The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:
 The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay
 Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay,— 190
 “Now stab and end the creature—to the heft!”

XXXIII

Not hear? when noise was everywhere! it tolled
 Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears
 Of all the lost adventurers my peers,—
 How such a one was strong, and such was bold,
 And such was fortunate, yet each of old
 Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe of years.

XXXIV

There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides, mct
 To view the last of me, a living frame
 For one more picture! in a sheet of flame 200
 I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
 Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
 And blew. “*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.*”

MEN AND WOMEN AN EPISTLE

CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF
KARSHISH, THE ARAB PHYSICIAN

KARSHISH, the picker-up of learning's crumbs,
The not-incurious in God's handiwork
(This man's flesh he hath admirably made,
Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,
To coop up and keep down on earth a space
That puff of vapour from his mouth, man's soul)
—To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,
Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,
Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks
Befall the flesh through too much stress and strain,
Whereby the wily vapour fain would slip
Back and rejoin its source before the term,—
And aptest in contrivance (under God)
To baffle it by deftly stopping such:—
The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home
Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame with
peace)
Three samples of true snake-stone—rarer still,
One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,
(But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than drugs)
And writeth now the twenty-second time. 10
20

My journeyings were brought to Jericho:
Thus I resume. Who studious in our art
Shall count a little labour unrepaid?
I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone

On many a flinty furlong of this land.
 Also, the country-side is all on fire
 With rumours of a marching hitherward :
 Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.
 A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear ;
 Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls : 30
 I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.
 Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me,
 And once a town declared me for a spy ;
 But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,
 Since this poor covert where I pass the night,
 This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence
 A man with plague-sores at the third degree
 Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laughest here !
 'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,
 To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip 40
 And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.
 A viscid choler is observable
 In tertians, I was nearly bold to say ;
 And falling-sickness hath a happier cure
 Than our school wots of : there 's a spider here
 Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs,
 Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-grey back ;
 Take five and drop them . . . but who knows his
 mind, 50
 The Syrian run-a-gate I trust this to ?
 His service payeth me a sublime
 Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.
 Best wait : I reach Jerusalem at morn,
 There set in order my experiences,
 Gather what most deserves, and give thee all—
 Or I might add, Judæa's gum-tragacanth
 Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-grained,
 Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,
 In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease
 Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy—
 Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at Zoar— 60
 But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay: my Syrian blinketh gratefully,
 Protesteth his devotion is my price—
 Suppose I write what harms not, though he steal?
 I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,
 What set me off a-writing first of all.
 An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang!
 For, be it this town's barrenness—or else
 The Man had something in the look of him—
 His case has struck me far more than 't is worth.
 So, pardon if—(lest presently I lose
 In the great press of novelty at hand
 The care and pains this somehow stole from me)
 I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind,
 Almost in sight—for, wilt thou have the truth?
 The very man is gone from me but now,
 Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.
 Thus then, and let thy better wit help all!

70

"T is but a case of mania—subinduced
 By epilepsy, at the turning-point
 Of trance prolonged unduly some three days;
 When, by the exhibition of some drug
 Or spell, exorcization, stroke of art
 Unknown to me and which 't were well to know,
 The evil thing out-breaking all at once
 Left the man whole and sound of body indeed,—
 But, flinging (so to speak) life's gates too wide,
 Making a clear house of it too suddenly,
 The first conceit that entered might inscribe
 Whatever it was minded on the wall
 So plainly at that vantage, as it were,
 (First come, first served) that nothing subsequent
 Attaineth to erase those fancy-scrawls
 The just-returned and new-established soul
 Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart
 That henceforth she will read or these or none.
 And first—the man's own firm conviction rests
 That he was dead (in fact they buried him)

80

90

—That he was dead and then restored to life
 By a Nazarene physician of his tribe: 100
 —'Sayeth, the same bade "Rise," and he did rise.
 "Such cases are diurnal," thou wilt cry.
 Not so this figment!—not, that such a fume,
 Instead of giving way to time and health,
 Should eat itself into the life of life,
 As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and all!
 For see, how he takes up the after-life,
 The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew,
 Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,
 The body's habit wholly laudable, 110
 As much, indeed, beyond the common health
 As he were made and put aside to show.
 Think, could we penetrate by any drug
 And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,
 And bring it clear and fair, by three days' sleep!
 Whence has the man the balm that brightens all?
 This grown man eyes the world now like a child.
 Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,
 Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,
 To bear my inquisition. While they spoke, 120
 Now sharply, now with sorrow,—told the case,—
 He listened not except I spoke to him,
 But folded his two hands and let them talk,
 Watching the flies that buzzed: and yet no fool.
 And that's a sample how his years must go.
 Look, if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,
 Should find a treasure,—can he use the same
 With straitened habits and with tastes starved small,
 And take at once to his impoverished brain
 The sudden element that changes things, 130
 That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand,
 And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust?
 Is he not such an one as moves to mirth—
 Warily parsimonious, when no need,
 Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times?
 All prudent counsel as to what befits

The golden mean, is lost on such an one :
 The man's fantastic will is the man's law.
 So here—we 'll call the treasure knowledge, say,
 Increased beyond the fleshly faculty—140
 Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
 Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing heaven :
 The man is witless of the size, the sum,
 The value in proportion of all things,
 Or whether it be little or be much.
 Discourse to him of prodigious armaments
 Assembled to besiege his city now,
 And of the passing of a mule with gourds—
 'T is one ! Then take it on the other side,
 Speak of some trifling fact,—he will gaze rapt
 With stupor at its very littleness,
 (Far as I see) as if in that indeed
 He caught prodigious import, whole results ;
 And so will turn to us the bystanders
 In ever the same stupor (note this point)
 That we too see not with his opened eyes.
 Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,
 Preposterously, at cross purposes.
 Should his child sicken unto death,—why, look
 For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,150
 Or pretermission of the daily craft !
 While a word, gesture, glance from that same child
 At play or in the school or laid asleep,
 Will startle him to an agony of fear,
 Exasperation, just as like. Demand
 The reason why—“ 't is but a word,” object—
 “ A gesture ”—he regards thee as our lord
 Who lived there in the pyramid alone,
 Looked at us (dost thou mind ?) when, being young,
 We both would unadvisedly recite160
 Some charm's beginning, from that book of his,
 Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst
 All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.
 Thou and the child have each a veil alike170

Thrown o'er your heads, from under which ye both
 Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match
 Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know !
 He holds on firmly to some thread of life—
 (It is the life to lead perforcefully)
 Which runs across some vast distracting orb 180
 Of glory on either side that meagre thread,
 Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet—
 The spiritual life around the earthly life :
 The law of that is known to him as this,
 His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.
 So is the man perplexed with impulses
 Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,
 Proclaiming what is right and wrong across,
 And not along, this black thread through the blaze—
 " It should be " baulked by " here it cannot be." 190
 And oft the man's soul springs into his face
 As if he saw again and heard again
 His sage that bade him " Rise " and he did rise.
 Something, a word, a tick of the blood within
 Admonishes : then back he sinks at once
 To ashes, who was very fire before,
 In sedulous recurrence to his trade
 Whereby he earneth him the daily bread ;
 And studiously the humbler for that pride,
 Professedly the faultier that he knows 200
 God's secret, while he holds the thread of life.
 Indeed the especial marking of the man
 Is prone submission to the heavenly will—
 Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.
 'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last
 For that same death which must restore his being
 To equilibrium, body loosening soul
 Divorced even now by premature full growth :
 He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live
 So long as God please, and just how God please. 210
 He even seeketh not to please God more
 (Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.

Hence, I perceive not he effects to preach
 The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be,
 Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do:
 How can he give his neighbour the real ground,
 His own conviction? Ardent as he is—
 Call his great truth a lie, why, still the old
 "Be it as God please" reassureth him.

I probed the sore as thy disciple should: 220

"How, beast," said I, "this stolid carelessness
 Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march
 To stamp out like a little spark thy town,
 Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once?"
 He merely looked with his large eyes on me.
 The man is apathetic, you deduce?
 Contrariwise, he loves both old and young,
 Able and weak, affects the very brutes
 And birds—how say I? flowers of the field—
 As a wise workman recognizes tools

230

In a master's workshop, loving what they make.
 Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb:

Only impatient, let him do his best,
 At ignorance and carelessness and sin—
 An indignation which is promptly curbed:
 As when in certain travels I have feigned

To be an ignoramus in our art

According to some preconceived design,
 And happed to hear the land's practitioners
 Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,
 Prattle fantastically on disease,

240

Its cause and cure—and I must hold my peace!

Thou wilt object—why have I not ere this
 Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene
 Who wrought this cure, enquiring at the source,
 Conferring with the frankness that befits?
 Alas! it grieveth me, the learned leech
 Perished in a tumult many years ago,
 Accused,—our learning's fate,—of wizardry,

Rebellion, to the setting up a rule
And creed prodigious as described to me.
His death, which happened when the earthquake fell
(Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss
To occult learning in our lord the sage
Who lived there in the pyramid alone)
Was wrought by the mad people—that's their wont!
On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,
To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—
How could he stop the earthquake? That's their way!
The other imputations must be lies:
But take one, though I loathe to give it thee,
In mere respect to any good man's fame.
(And after all, our patient Lazarus
Is stark mad; should we count on what he says?
Perhaps not: though in writing to a leech
"T is well to keep back nothing of a case.)
This man so cured regards the curer then,
As—God forgive me! who but God himself,
Creator and sustainer of the world,
That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile!
—'Sayeth that such an one was born and lived,
Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,
Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know,
And yet was . . . what I said nor choose repeat,
And must have so avouched himself, in fact,
In hearing of this very Lazarus
Who saith—but why all this of what he saith?
Why write of trivial matters, things of price
Calling at every moment for remark?
I noticed on the margin of a pool
Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,
Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange!

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,
Which, now that I review it, needs must seem
Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth!
Nor I myself discern in what is writ

Good cause for the peculiar interest
 And awe indeed this man has touched me with.
 Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness
 Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus: 290
 I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills
 Like an old lion's cheek teeth. Out there came
 A moon made like a face with certain spots
 Multiform, manifold and menacing:
 Then a wind rose behind me. So we met
 In this old sleepy town at unaware,
 The man and I. I send thee what is writ.
 Regard it as a chance, a matter risked
 To this ambiguous Syrian—he may lose,
 Or steal, or give it thee with equal good. 300
 Jerusalem's repose shall make amends
 For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine;
 'Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell!

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
 So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too—
 So, through the thunder comes a human voice
 Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!
 Face, My hands fashioned, see it in myself.
 Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of mine,
 But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
 And thou must love me who have died for thee!" 310
 The madman saith He said so: it is strange.

FRA LIPPO LIPPI

I AM poor brother Lippo, by your leave !
 You need not clap your torches to my face.
 Zooks, what 's to blame ? you think you see a monk !
 What, 't is past midnight, and you go the rounds,
 And here you catch me at an alley's end
 Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar ?
 The Carmine 's my cloister : hunt it up,
 Do,—harry out, if you must show your zeal,
 Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,
 And nip each softling of a wee white mouse, 10
Weke, weke, that 's crept to keep him company !
 Aha, you know your betters ? Then, you 'll take
 Your hand away that 's fiddling on my throat,
 And please to know me likewise. Who am I ?
 Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend
 Three streets off—he 's a certain . . . how d' ye call ?
 Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,
 In the house that caps the corner. Boh ! you were best !
 Remember and tell me, the day you 're hanged,
 How you affected such a gullet's-gripe ! 20
 But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves
 Pick up a manner nor discredit you :
 Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets
 And count fair prize what comes into their net ?
 He 's Judas to a tittle, that man is !
 Just such a face ! Why, sir, you make amends.
 Lord, I 'm not angry ! Bid your hangdogs go
 Drink out this quarter-florin to the health
 Of the munificent House that harbours me
 (And many more beside, lads ! more beside !) 30
 And all 's come square again. I 'd like his face—
 His, elbowing on his comrade in the door

With the pike and lantern,—for the slave that holds
 John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair
 With one hand ("Look you, now," as who should say)
 And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped!
 It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,
 A wood-coal or the like? or you should see!
 Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.
 What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,
 You know them and they take you? like enough! 40
 I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—
 'Tell you, I liked your looks at very first.
 Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch.
 Here's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands
 To roam the town and sing out carnival,
 And I've been three weeks shut within my mew,
 A-painting for the great man, saints and saints
 And saints again. I could not paint all night—
 Ouf! I leaned out of the window for fresh air. 50
 There came a hurry of feet and little feet,
 A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whists of song,—
Flower o' the broom,
Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!
Flower o' the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good in life since?
Flower o' the thyme—and so on. Round they went.
 Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter
 Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight,—three slim shapes,
 And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir, flesh and blood, 60
 That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went,
 Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
 All the bed-furniture—a dozen knots,
 There was a ladder! Down I let myself,
 Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped,
 And after them. I came up with the fun
 Hard by Saint Laurence, hail fellow, well met,—
Flower o' the rose,
If I've been merry, what matter who knows?
 And so as I was stealing back again 70

To get to bed and have a bit of sleep
 Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work
 On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast
 With his great round stone to subdue the flesh,
 You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!
 Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head—
 Mine's shaved—a monk, you say,—the sting's in that!
 If Master Cosimo announced himself,
 Mum's the word naturally; but a monk!
 Come, what am I a beast for? tell us, now! 80
 I was a baby when my mother died
 And father died and left me in the street.
 I starved there, God knows how, a year or two
 On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,
 Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,
 My stomach being empty as your hat,
 The wind doubled me up and down I went.
 Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand,
 (Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)
 And so along the wall, over the bridge, 90
 By the straight cut to the convent. Six words there,
 While I stood munching my first bread that month:
 "So, boy, you're minded," quoth the good fat father
 Wiping his own mouth, 't was refection-time,—
 "To quit this very miserable world?
 "Will you renounce" . . . "the mouthful of bread?" thought I;
 By no means! Brief, they made a monk of me;
 I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,
 Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-house,
 Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici 100
 Have given their hearts to—all at eight years old.
 Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,
 "T was not for nothing—the good bellyful,
 The warm serge and the rope that goes all round,
 And day-long blessed idleness beside!
 "Let's see what the urchin's fit for"—that came next.
 Not overmuch their way, I must confess.
 Such a to-do! They tried me with their books:

Lord, they 'd have taught me Latin in pure waste !

Flower o' the clove,

110

All the Latin I construe is, " amo " I love !

But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets

Eight years together, as my fortune was,

Watching folk's faces to know who will fling

The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,

And who will curse or kick him for his pains,—

Which gentleman processional and fine,

Holding a candle to the Sacrament,

Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch

The droppings of the wax to sell again,

120

Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped,—

How say I?—nay, which dog bites, which lets drop

His bone from the heap of offal in the street,—

Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,

He learns the looks of things, and none the less

For admonition from the hunger-pinch.

I had a store of such remarks, be sure,

Which, after I found leisure, turned to use :

I drew men's faces on my copy-books,

Scrawled them within the antiphonary's marge,

130

Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,

Found eyes and nose and chin for A's and B's,

And made a string of pictures of the world

Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,

On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked black.

" Nay," quoth the Prior, " turn him out, d' ye say ?

In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.

What if at last we get our man of parts,

We Carmelites, like those Camaldolesse

And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine

140

And put the front on it that ought to be ! "

And hereupon he bade me daub away.

Thank you ! my head being crammed, the walls a blank,

Never was such prompt disemburdening.

First, every sort of monk, the black and white,

I drew them, fat and lean : then, folks at church.

From good old gossips waiting to confess
 Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends,—
 To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
 Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there
 With the little children round him in a row
 Of admiration, half for his beard and half
 For that white anger of his victim's son
 Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,
 Signing himself with the other because of Christ
 (Whose sad face on the cross sees only this
 After the passion of a thousand years)
 Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head,
 (Which the intent eyes looked through) came at eve
 On tip-toe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,
 Her pair of ear-rings and a bunch of flowers
 (The brute took growling), prayed, and so was gone.
 I painted all, then cried " 'T is ask and have;
 Choose, for more 's ready!"—laid the ladder flat,
 And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.
 The monks closed in a circle and praised loud
 Till checked,—taught what to see and not to see,
 Being simple bodies,—“ That 's the very man !
 Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog !
 That woman 's like the Prior's niece who comes
 To care about his asthma: it 's the life ! ”
 But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and funk'd—
 Their betters took their turn to see and say:
 The Prior and the learned pulled a face
 And stopped all that in no time. “ How? what 's here ?
 Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all !
 Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true
 As much as pea and pea ! it 's devil's game !
 Your business is not to catch men with show,
 With homage to the perishable clay,
 But lift them over it, ignore it all,
 Make them forget there 's such a thing as flesh.
 Your business is to paint the souls of men—
 Man's soul, and it 's a fire, smoke . . . no it 's not . . .

150

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180

It's vapour done up like a new-born babe—
 (In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)
 It's . . . well, what matters talking, it's the soul!
 Give us no more of body than shows soul!

Here's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising God!
 That sets you praising,—why not stop with him?

Why put all thoughts of praise out of our heads
 With wonder at lines, colours, and what not?
 Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!
 Rub all out, try at it a second time.

Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,
 She's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say,—
 Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off!
 Have it all out!" Now, is this sense, I ask?

A fine way to paint soul, by painting body
 So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further
 And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white
 When what you put for yellow's simply black,
 And any sort of meaning looks intense

When all beside itself means and looks nought.

Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
 Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
 Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
 Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,
 The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty

You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
 Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?
 Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,
 Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
 And then add soul and heighten them threefold?

Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—
 (I never saw it—put the case the same—)
 If you get simple beauty and nought else,
 You get about the best thing God invents:

That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have missed,
 Within yourself, when you return him thanks.

"Rub all out!" Well, well, there's my life, in short,
 And so the thing has gone on ever since.

190

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I 'm grown a man no doubt, I 've broken bounds:
 You should not take a fellow eight years old
 And make him swear to never kiss the girls.
 I 'm my own master, paint now as I please—
 Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house!
 Lord, it 's fast holding by the rings in front—
 Those great rings serve more purposes than just
 To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse!

230

And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes
 Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
 The heads shake still—“ It 's Art's decline, my son !
 You 're not of the true painters, great and old ;
 Brother Angelico 's the man, you 'll find ;
 Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer :
 Fag on at flesh, you 'll never make the third ! ”

Flower o' the pine,
You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I 'll stick to mine !

I 'm not the third, then : bless us, they must know ! 240
 Don't you think they 're the likeliest to know,
 They with their Latin ? So, I swallow my rage,
 Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint
 To please them—sometimes do and sometimes don't
 For, doing most, there 's pretty sure to come
 A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints—
 A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—

(Flower o' the peach,
Death for us all, and his own life for each !)

And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs over,
 The world and life 's too big to pass for a dream,
 And I do these wild things in sheer despite,
 And play the fooleries you catch me at,
 In pure rage ! The old mill-horse, out at grass
 After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,
 Although the miller does not preach to him
 The only good of grass is to make chaff.
 What would men have ? Do they like grass or no—
 May they or mayn't they ? all I want 's the thing
 Settled for ever one way. As it is, 260

You tell too many lies and hurt yourself:
 You don't like what you only like too much,
 You do like what, if given you at your word,
 You find abundantly detestable.
 For me, I think I speak as I was taught;
 I always see the garden and God there
 A-making man's wife: and, my lesson learned,
 The value and significance of flesh,
 I can't unlearn ten minutes afterwards.

You understand me: I 'm a beast, I know. 270
 But see, now—why, I see as certainly
 As that the morning-star 's about to shine,
 What will hap some day. We 've a youngster here
 Comes to our convent, studies what I do,
 Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop:
 His name is Guidi—he 'll not mind the monks—
 They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk—
 He picks my practice up—he 'll paint apace,
 I hope so—though I never live so long,
 I know what 's sure to follow. You be judge! 280
 You speak no Latin more than I, belike;
 However, you 're my man, you 've seen the world
 —The beauty and the wonder and the power,
 The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,
 Changes, surprises,—and God made it all!
 —For what? Do you feel thankful, ay or no,
 For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
 The mountain round it and the sky above,
 Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
 These are the frame to? What 's it all about? 290
 To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,
 Wondered at? oh, this last of course!—you say.
 But why not do as well as say,—paint these
 Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
 God's works—paint anyone, and count it crime
 To let a truth slip. Don't object, " His works
 Are here already; nature is complete:

Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)
 There's no advantage! you must beat her, then."
 For, don't you mark? we're made so that we love 300
 First when we see them painted, things we have passed
 Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
 And so they are better, painted—better to us,
 Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;
 God uses us to help each other so,
 Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,
 Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,
 And trust me but you should, though! How much more,
 If I drew higher things with the same truth!
 That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place, 310
 Interpret God to all of you! Oh, oh,
 It makes me mad to see what men shall do
 And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,
 Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good:
 To find its meaning is my meat and drink.
 "Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer!"
 Strikes in the Prior: "when your meaning's plain
 It does not say to folk—remember matins,
 Or, mind you fast next Friday!" Why, for this
 What need of art at all? A skull and bones, 320
 Two bits of stick nailed crosswise, or, what's best,
 A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.
 I painted a Saint Laurence six months since
 At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style:
 "How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?"
 I ask a brother: "Hugely," he returns—
 "Already not one phiz of your three slaves
 Who turn the Deacon off his toasted side,
 But's scratched and prodded to our heart's content,
 The pious people have so eased their own 330
 With coming to say prayers there in a rage:
 We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.
 Expect another job this time next year,
 For pity and religion grow i' the crowd—
 Your painting serves its purpose!" Hang the fools!

—That is—you 'll not mistake an idle word
 Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,
 Tasting the air this spicy night which turns
 The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine !
 Oh, the church knows ! don't misreport me, now ! 340
 It 's natural a poor monk out of bounds
 Should have his apt word to excuse himself:
 And hearken how I plot to make amends.
 I have bethought me: I shall paint a piece
 . . . There 's for you ! Give me six months, then go, see
 Something in Sant' Ambrogio's ! Bless the nuns !
 They want a cast of my office. I shall paint
 God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,
 Ringed by a bowery, flowery angel-brood
 Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet 350
 As puff on puff of grated orris-root
 When ladies crowd to church at midsummer.
 And then in the front, of course a saint or two—
 Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,
 Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white
 The convent's friends and gives them a long day,
 And Job, I must have him there past mistake,
 The man of Uz (and Us without the z,
 Painters who need his patience). Well, all these
 Secured at their devotion, up shall come 360
 Out of a corner when you least expect,
 As one by a dark stair into a great light,
 Music and talking, who but Lippo ! I !—
 Mazed, motionless and moonstruck—I 'm the man !
 Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear ?
 I, caught up with my monk's-things by mistake,
 My old serge gown and rope that goes all round,
 I, in this presence, this pure company !
 Where 's a hole, where 's a corner for escape ?
 Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing 370
 Forward, puts out a soft palm—"Not so fast!"
 —Addresses the celestial presence, "nay—
 He made you and devised you, after all,

Though he 's none of you ! Could Saint John there, draw—
His camel-hair make up a painting-brush ?
We come to brother Lippo for all that,
Iste perfecit opus !" So, all smile—
I shuffle sideways with my blushing face
Under the cover of a hundred wings
Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you 're gay 380
And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,
Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
The hothead husband ! Thus I scuttle off
To some safe bench behind, not letting go
The palm of her, the little lily thing
That spoke the good word for me in the nick,
Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I would say.
And so all 's saved for me, and for the church
A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence !
Your hand, sir, and good-bye : no lights, no lights ! 390
The street 's hushed, and I know my own way back,
Don't fear me ! There 's the grey beginning. Zooks !

ANDREA DEL SARTO

(Called "the Faultless Painter")

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,
 No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
 Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
 You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?
 I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,
 Treat his own subject after his own way,
 Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
 And shut the money into this small hand
 When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?
 Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love! 10
 I often am much wearier than you think,
 This evening more than usual, and it seems
 As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
 Here by the window with your hand in mine,
 And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole,
 Both of one mind, as married people use,
 Quietly, quietly the evening through,
 I might get up to-morrow to my work
 Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
 To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this! 20
 Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
 And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
 Don't count the time lost, neither; you must serve
 For each of the five pictures we require:
 It saves a model. So! keep looking so—
 My serpentine beauty, rounds on rounds!
 —How could you ever prick those perfect ears,
 Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet—

My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
 Which everybody looks on and calls his,
 And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
 While she looks—no one's: very dear, no less.
 You smile? why, there's my picture ready made,
 There's what we painters call our harmony!
 A common greyness silvers everything,—
 All in a twilight, you and I alike
 —You, at the point of your first pride in me
 (That's gone you know),—but I, at every point;
 My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
 To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.

There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;
 That length of convent-wall across the way
 Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
 The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease,
 And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
 Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape
 As if I saw alike my work and self
 And all that I was born to be and do,
 A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
 How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead;
 So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!

I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!
 This chamber for example—turn your head—
 All that's behind us! You don't understand
 Nor care to understand about my art,
 But you can hear at least when people speak:
 And that cartoon, the second from the door
 —It is the thing, Love! so such things should be—
 Behold Madonna!—I am bold to say.
 I can do with my pencil what I know,
 What I see, what at bottom of my heart
 I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
 Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly,
 I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge,
 Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
 And just as much they used to say in France.

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At any rate 't is easy, all of it!
 No sketches first, no studies, that 's long past:
 I do what many dream of, all their lives,
 —Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do,
 And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
 On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
 Who strive—you don't know how the others strive
 To paint a little thing like that you smeared
 Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,—
 Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
 (I know his name, no matter)—so much less!
 Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.
 There burns a truer light of God in them,
 In their vexed, beating, stuffed and stopped-up brain,
 Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
 This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
 Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
 Reach many a time a heaven that 's shut to me,
 Enter and take their place there sure enough,
 Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
 My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
 The sudden blood of these men! at a word—
 Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
 I, painting from myself and to myself,
 Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
 Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
 Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
 His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,
 Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that?
 Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?
 Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
 Or what 's a heaven for? All is silver-grey,
 Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!
 I know both what I want and what might gain,
 And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
 "Had I been two, another and myself,
 Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No doubt.
 Yonder 's a work now, of that famous youth

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90

100

The Urbinate who died five years ago.
 ('T is copied, George Vasari sent it me.)

Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
 Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
 Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
 Above and through his art—for it gives way; 110

That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
 A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
 Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,
 He means right—that, a child may understand.

Still, what an arm! and I could alter it:
 But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
 Out of me, out of me! And wherefore out?
 Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
 We might have risen to Rafael, I and you!

Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think— 120

More than I merit, yes, by many times.
 But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
 And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
 And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
 The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—
 Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!
 Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
 "God and the glory! never care for gain.
 The present by the future, what is that?
 Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo! 130

Rafael is waiting: up to God, all three!"
 I might have done it for you. So it seen's:
 Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.
 Beside, incentives come from the soul's self;
 The rest avail not. Why do I need you?
 What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo?
 In this world, who can do a thing, will not;
 And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:
 Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—
 And thus we half-men struggle. At the end, 140

God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
 'T is safer for me, if the award be strict,

That I am something underrated here,
 Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
 I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,
 For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.

The best is when they pass and look aside;
 But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.

Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time,
 And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!

I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
 Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
 In that humane great monarch's golden look,—
 One finger in his beard or twisted curl

Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
 One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,

The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
 I painting proudly with his breath on me,

All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
 Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
 Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—
 And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,

This in the background, waiting on my work,
 To crown the issue with a last reward!

A good time, was it not, my kingly days?
 And had you not grown restless . . . but I know—

'T is done and past; 't was right, my instinct said;
 Too live the life grew, golden and not grey,

And I 'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
 Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.

How could it end in any other way?

You called me, and I came home to your heart.

The triumph was—to reach and stay there; since
 I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?

Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,
 You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!

" Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;

The Roman's is the better when you pray,
 But still the other's Virgin was his wife—"

Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge

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Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows
 My better fortune, I resolve to think.
 For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
 Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
 To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .
 (When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
 Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
 Too lifted up in heart because of it)
 " Friend, there 's a certain sorry little scrub
 Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how, 190
 Who, were he set to plan and execute
 As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,
 Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!"
 To Rafael's!—And indeed the arm is wrong.
 I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see,
 Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go!
 Ay, but the soul! he 's Rafael! rub it out!
 Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
 (What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?
 Do you forget already words like those?) 200
 If really there was such a chance, so lost,—
 Is, whether you 're—not grateful—but more pleased.
 Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!
 This hour has been an hour! Another smile?
 If you would sit thus by me every night
 I should work better, do you comprehend?
 I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
 See, it is settled dusk now; there 's a star;
 Morello 's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
 The cue-owls speak the name we call them by. 210
 Come from the window, Love,—come in, at last,
 Inside the melancholy little house
 We built to be so gay with. God is just.
 King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights
 When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
 The walls become illumined, brick from brick
 Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
 That gold of his I did cement them with!

Let us but love each other. Must you go?
 That Cousin here again? he waits outside? 220
 Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans?
 More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
 Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
 While hand and eye and something of a heart
 Are left me, work 's my ware, and what 's it worth?
 I 'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
 The grey remainder of the evening out,
 Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
 How I could paint, were I but back in France,
 One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face, 230
 Not yours this time! I want you at my side
 To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—
 Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
 Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
 I take the subjects for his corridor.
 Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,
 And throw him in another thing or two
 If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
 To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
 What 's better and what 's all I care about, 240
 Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff!
 Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
 The Cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
 I regret little, I would change still less.
 Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
 The very wrong to Francis!—it is true
 I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
 And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
 My father and my mother died of want. 250
 Well, had I riches of my own? you see
 How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
 They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:
 And I have laboured somewhat in my time
 And not been paid profusely. Some good son

Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try !
No doubt, there 's something strikes a balance. Yes,
You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.
This must suffice me here. What would one have ?
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance— 260
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me
To cover—the three first without a wife,
While I have mine ! So—still they overcome
Because there 's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle ! Go, my Love.

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT SAINT
PRAXED'S CHURCH

ROME, 15—.

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity!
Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?
Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not! Well—
She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!
What's done is done, and she is dead beside,
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.
Life, how and what is it? As here I lie
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" Peace, peace seems all.
Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace;
And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know:
—Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care;
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
He graced his carrion with, God curse the same!
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence
One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
And up into the aery dome where live
The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk:
And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,

10

20

With those nine columns round me, two and two,
 The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands:
 Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
 As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse. 30

—Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,
 Put me where I may look at him ! True peach,
 Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize !
 Draw close: that conflagration of my church
 —What then ? So much was saved if aught were missed !

My sons, ye would not be my death ? Go dig
 The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,
 Drop water gently till the surface sink,
 And if ye find . . . Ah God, I know not, I ! . . .
 Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft, 40

And corded up in a tight olive-frail,
 Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,
 Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
 Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .
 Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
 That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
 So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
 Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
 Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
 For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst ! 50

Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years :
 Man goeth to the grave, and where is he ?
 Did I say basalt for my slab, sons ? Black—
 "T was ever antique-black I meant ! How else
 Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath ?
 The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
 Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
 Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
 The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,
 Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan 60

Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
 And Moses with the tables . . . but I know
 Ye mark me not ! What do they whisper thee,
 Child of my bowels, Anselm ? Ah, ye hope

To revel down my villas while I gasp
 Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine
 Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at !
 Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then !
 'T is jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve
 My bath must needs be left behind, alas !

One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
 There 's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—
 And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
 Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
 And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs ?

—That 's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
 Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,
 No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—
 Tully, my masters ? Ulpian serves his need !

And then how I shall lie through centuries,
 And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
 And see God made and eaten all day long,
 And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
 Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke !

For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
 Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
 I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
 And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,
 And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop

Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work :
 And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
 Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
 About the life before I lived this life,
 And this life too, popes, cardinals and priests,

Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,
 Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
 And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
 And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,
 —Aha, *ELUCESCEBAT* quoth our friend ?

No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best !
 Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
 All *lapis*, all, sons ! Else I give the Pope

70

80

90

100

My villas! Will ye ever eat my heart?
Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
They glitter like your mother's for my soul,
Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down, 110
To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
" Do I live, am I dead ? " There, leave me, there !
For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it ! Stone—
Gritstone, a-crumble ! Clammy squares which sweat
As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world !
Well, go ! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
But in a row: and, going, turn your backs 120
—Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church for peace,
That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,
As still he envied me, so fair she was !

ONE WORD MORE

TO E. B. B.

(London, September, 1855)

I

THERE they are, my fifty men and women
 Naming me the fifty poems finished!
 Take them, Love, the book and me together:
 Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

II

Rafael made a century of sonnets,
 Made and wrote them in a certain volume
 Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil
 Else he only used to draw Madonnas:
 These, the world might view—but one, the volume.
 Who that one, you ask? Your heart instructs you.
 Did she live and love it all her lifetime?
 Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets,
 Die, and let it drop beside her pillow
 Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,
 Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving—
 Cheek the world was wont to hail a painter's,
 Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a poet's?

10

III

You and I would rather read that volume,
 (Taken to his beating bosom by it)
 Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael,
 Would we not? than wonder at Madonnas—

20

Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,
 Her, that visits Florence in a vision,
 Her, that's left with lilies in the Louvre—
 Seen by us and all the world in circle.

IV

You and I will never read that volume.
 Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple
 Guarded long the treasure-book and loved it.
 Guido Reni dying, all Bologna
 Cried, and the world cried too, "Ours, the treasure!" 30
 Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

▼

Dante once prepared to paint an angel:
 Whom to please? You whisper "Beatrice."
 While he mused and traced it and retraced it,
 (Peradventure with a pen corroded
 Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,
 When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the wicked,
 Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma,
 Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,
 Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle,
 Let the wretch go festering through Florence)— 40
 Dante, who loved well because he hated,
 Hated wickedness that hinders loving,
 Dante standing, studying his angel,—
 In there broke the folk of his Inferno.
 Says he—"Certain people of importance"
 (Such he gave his daily dreadful line to)
 "Entered and would seize, forsooth, the poet."
 Says the poet—"Then I stopped my painting."

40

VI

You and I would rather see that angel,
 Painted by the tenderness of Dante,
 Would we not?—than read a fresh Inferno. 50

VII

You and I will never see that picture.
 While he mused on love and Beatrice,
 While he softened o'er his outlined angel,
 In they broke, those "people of importance:"
 We and Bice bear the loss forever.

VIII

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture?
 This: no artist lives and loves, that longs not
 Once, and only once, and for one only, 60
 (Ah, the prize!) to find his love a language
 Fit and fair and simple and sufficient—
 Using nature that's an art to others,
 Not, this one time, art that's turned his nature.
 Ay, of all the artists living, loving,
 None but would forego his proper dowry,—
 Does he paint? he fain would write a poem,—
 Does he write? he fain would paint a picture,
 Put to proof art alien to the artist's,
 Once, and only once, and for one only, 70
 So to be the man and leave the artist,
 Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow,

IX

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement!
 He who smites the rock and spreads the water,
 Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,
 Even he, the minute makes immortal,
 Proves, perchance, but mortal in the minute,
 Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.
 While he smites, how can he but remember,
 So he smote before, in such a peril, 80
 When they stood and mocked—"Shall smiting help us?"
 When they drank and sneered—"A stroke is easy!"
 When they wiped their mouths and went their journey,

Throwing him for thanks—" But drought was pleasant."
 Thus old memories mar the actual triumph;
 Thus the doing savours of disrelish;
 Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat;
 O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate,
 Carelessness or consciousness—the gesture.
 For he bears an ancient wrong about him,
 Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces,
 Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude—
 " How shouldst thou, of all men, smite, and save us ? "
 Guesses what is like to prove the sequel—
 " Egypt's flesh-pots—nay, the drought was better."

90

x

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant !
 Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven brilliance,
 Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat.
 Never dares the man put off the prophet.

xi

Did he love one face from out the thousands,
 (Were she Jethro's daughter, white and wisely,
 Were she but the Æthiopian bondslave,) 100
 He would envy yon dumb patient camel,
 Keeping a reserve of scanty water
 Meant to save his own life in the desert;
 Ready in the desert to deliver
 (Kneeling down to let his breast be opened)
 Hoard and life together for his mistress.

100

xii

I shall never, in the years remaining,
 Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues,
 Make you music that should all-express me;
 So it seems : I stand on my attainment.
 This of verse alone, one life allows me;

110

Verse and nothing else have I to give you.
 Other heights in other lives, God willing:
 All the gifts from all the heights, your own, Love!

XIII

Yet a semblance of resource avails us—
 Shade so finely touched, love's sense must seize it.
 Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,
 Lines I write the first time and the last time. 120
 He who works in fresco, steals a hair-brush,
 Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly,
 Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little,
 Makes a strange art of an art familiar,
 Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets.
 He who blows thro' bronze, may breathe thro' silver,
 Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.
 He who writes, may write for once as I do.

XIV

Love, you saw me gather men and women,
 Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,
 Enter each and all, and use their service, 130
 Speak from every mouth,—the speech, a poem.
 Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
 Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving:
 I am mine and yours—the rest be all men's,
 Karshish, Cleon, Norbert, and the fifty.
 Let me speak this once in my true person,
 Not as Lippo, Roland, or Andrea,
 Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence:
 Pray you, look on these my men and women,
 Take and keep my fifty poems finished; 140
 Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also!
 Poor the speech; be how I speak, for all things.

xv

Not but that you know me! Lo, the moon's self!
 Here in London, yonder late in Florence,
 Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured.
 Curving on a sky imbrued with colour.
 Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,
 Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth.
 Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato,
 Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,
 Perfect till the nightingales applauded.
 Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished,
 Hard to greet, she traverses the house-roofs,
 Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver,
 Goes dispiritedly, glad to finish.

150

xvi

What, there 's nothing in the moon noteworthy?
 Nay: for if that moon could love a mortal,
 Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy),
 All her magic ('t is the old sweet mythos),
 She would turn a new side to her mortal,
 Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman—
 Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,
 Blind to Galileo on his turret,
 Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats—him, even!
 Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal—
 When she turns round, comes again in heaven,
 Opens out anew for worse or better!
 Proves she like some portent of an iceberg
 Swimming full upon the ship it founders,
 Hungry with huge teeth of splintered crystals?
 Proves she as the paved work of a sapphire
 Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain?
 Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu
 Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest,
 Stand upon the paved work of a sapphire.

160

170

Like the bodied heaven in his clearness
 Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved work,
 When they ate and drank and saw God also!

XVII

What were seen? None knows, none ever shall know. 180
 Only this is sure—the sight were other,
 Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,
 Dying now impoverished here in London.
 God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
 Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
 One to show a woman when he loves her!

XVIII

This I say of me, but think of you, Love!
 This to you—yourself my moon of poets!
 Ah, but that's the world's side, there's the wonder,
 Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you! 190
 There, in turn I stand with them and praise you—
 Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
 But the best is when I glide from out them,
 Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
 Come out on the other side, the novel
 Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,
 Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

XIX

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,
 Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,
 Wrote one song—and in my brain I sing it,
 Drew one angel—borne, see, on my bosom! 200

R. B.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

SONGS FROM "JAMES LEE'S WIFE"

V

ON THE CLIFF

I

I LEANED on the turf,
I looked at a rock
Left dry by the surf;
For the turf, to call it grass were to mock:
Dead to the roots, so deep was done
The work of the summer sun.

II

And the rock lay flat
As an anvil's face:
No iron like that!
Baked dry; of a weed, of a shell, no trace: 10
Sunshine outside, but ice at the core,
Death's altar by the lone shore.

III

On the turf, sprang gay
With his films of blue,
No cricket, I 'll say,
But a war-horse, barded and chanfroned too
The gift of a quixote-mage to his knight
Real fairy, with wings all right.

IV

On the rock, they scorch
 Like a drop of fire
 From a brandished torch,
 Fall two red fans of a butterfly:
 No turf, no rock: in their ugly stead,
 See, wonderful blue and red!

20

V

Is it not so
 With the minds of men?
 The level and low,
 The burnt and bare, in themselves; but then
 With such a blue and red grace, not theirs,—
 Love settling unawares!

30

VII

AMONG THE ROCKS

I

Oh, good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth,
 This autumn morning! How he sets his bones
 To bask i' the sun, and thrusts out knees and feet
 For the ripple to run over in its mirth;
 Listening the while, where on the heap of stones
 The white breast of the sea-lark twitters sweet.

II

That is the doctrine, simple, ancient, true;
 Such is life's trial, as old earth smiles and knows.
 If you loved only what were worth your love,
 Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you:
 Make the low nature better by your throes!
 Give earth yourself, go up for gain above!

10

ABT VOGLER

(After he has been Extemporizing upon the Musical Instrument of his Invention)

I

WOULD that the structure brave, the manifold music I build,

Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their work,
Claiming each slave of the sound, at a touch, as when Solomon willed

Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that lurk,
Man, brute, reptile, fly,—alien of end and of aim,

Adverse, each from the other heaven-high, hell-deep removed,—

Should rush into sight at once as he named the ineffable Name,
And pile him a palace straight, to pleasure the princess he loved!

II

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful building of mine,
This which my keys in a crowd pressed and importuned to raise!

10

Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dispart now and now combine,

Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master his praise!
And one would bury his brow with a blind plunge down to hell,

Burrow awhile and build, broad on the roots of things,

Then up again swim into sight, having based me my palace well,

Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether springs.

III

And another would mount and march, like the excellent minion
he was,

Ay, another and yet another, one crowd but with many a crest,
Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent as glass,

Eager to do and die, yield each his place to the rest : 20
For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with fire,

When a great illumination surprises a festal night—
Outlining round and round Rome's dome from space to spire)

Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the pride of my soul was
in sight.

IV

In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it was certain, to match
man's birth,

Nature in turn conceived, obeying an impulse as I;
And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort to reach
the earth,

As the earth had done her best, in my passion, to scale the sky :
Novel splendours burst forth, grew familiar and dwelt with mine,
Not a point nor peak but found and fixed its wandering
star; 30

Meteor-moons, balls of blaze: and they did not pale nor pine,
For earth had attained to heaven, there was no more near
nor far.

▼

Nay more; for there wanted not who walked in the glare and
glow,

Presences plain in the place; or, fresh from the Protoplasm,
Furnished for ages to come, when a kindlier wind should blow,

Lured now to begin and live, in a house to their liking at last;
Or else the wonderful Dead who have passed through the body
and gone,

But were back once more to breathe in an old world worth
their new :
What never had been, was now ; what was, as it shall be anon ;
And what is,—shall I say, matched both ? for I was made
perfect too. 40

VI

All through my keys that gave their sounds to a wish of my soul,
All through my soul that praised as its wish flowed visibly forth,
All through music and me ! For think, had I painted the whole,
Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the process so wonder-
worth :
Had I written the same, made verse—still, effect proceeds
from cause,
Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how the tale is told ;
It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to laws,
Painter and poet are proud in the artist-list enrolled :—

VII

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can,
Existent behind all laws, that made them and, lo, they are ! 50
And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a
star.
Consider it well : each tone of our scale in itself is nought ;
It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is said :
Give it to me to use ! I mix it with two in my thought ;
And, there ! Ye have heard and seen : consider and bow the
head !

VIII

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I reared ;
Gone ! and the good tears start, the praises that come too
slow ;
For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that he feared,
That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing was to go. 60

Never to be again ! But many more of the kind
 As good, nay, better perchance : is this your comfort to me ?
 To me, who must be saved because I cling with my mind
 To the same, same self, same love, same God : ay, what was,
 shall be.

IX

Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee, the ineffable Name ?
 Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with hands !
 What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the same ?
 Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy power
 expands ?
 There shall never be one lost good ! What was, shall live as
 before ;
 The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound ; 70
 What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much good
 more ;
 On the earth the broken arcs ; in the heaven, a perfect round.

X

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good, shall exist ;
 Not its semblance, but itself ; no beauty, nor good, nor power
 Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
 When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
 The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
 The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
 Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard ;
 Enough that he heard it once : we shall hear it by-and-by. 80

XI

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
 For the fulness of the days ? Have we withered or agonized ?
 Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing might issue
 thence ?
 Why rushed the discords in, but that harmony should be
 prized ?

Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe:
But God has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear;
The rest may reason and welcome: 't is we musicians know.

XII

Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes her reign :
I will be patient and proud, and soberly acquiesce. 90
Give me the keys. I feel for the common chord again,
Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the minor,—yes,
And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien ground,
Surveying awhile the heights I rolled from into the deep;
Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my resting-place is
found,
The C Major of this life: so, now I will try to sleep.

RABBI BEN EZRA

I

GROW old along with me!
 The best is yet to be,
 The last of life, for which the first was made:
 Our times are in His hand
 Who saith "A whole I planned,
 Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"

II

Not that, amassing flowers,
 Youth sighed "Which rose make ours,
 Which lily leave and then as best recall?"
 Not that, admiring stars,
 It yearned "Nor Jove, nor Mars;
 Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them all!"

III

Not for such hopes and fears
 Annulling youth's brief years,
 Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!
 Rather I prize the doubt
 Low kinds exist without,
 Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

IV

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
 Were man but formed to feed
 On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:
 Such feasting ended, then
 As sure an end to men;
 Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed
 beast?

▼

Rejoice we are allied
 To That which doth provide
 And not partake, effect and not receive !
 A spark disturbs our clod ;
 Nearer we hold of God
 Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe. 30

VI

Then, welcome each rebuff
 That turns earth's smoothness rough,
 Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go !
 Be our joys three-parts pain !
 Strive, and hold cheap the strain ;
 Learn, nor account the pang ; dare, never grudge the throe !

VII

For thence,—a paradox
 Which comforts while it mocks,—
 Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail :
 What I aspired to be,
 And was not, comforts me :
 A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale. 40

VIII

What is he but a brute
 Whose flesh has soul to suit,
 Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play ?
 To man, propose this test—
 Thy body at its best,
 How far can that project thy soul on its lone way ?

IX

Yet gifts should prove their use :
 I own the Past profuse 50
 Of power each side, perfection every turn :
 Eyes, ears took in their dole,
 Brain treasured up the whole ;
 Should not the heart beat once " How good to live and learn ? "

X

Not once beat " Praise be Thine !
 I see the whole design,
 I, who saw power, see now love perfect too :
 Perfect I call Thy plan :
 Thanks that I was a man !
 Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what Thou shalt do ! " 60

XI

For pleasant is this flesh ;
 Our soul, in its rose-mesh
 Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest :
 Would we some prize might hold
 To match those manifold
 Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did best !

XII

Let us not always say
 " Spite of this flesh to-day
 I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole ! "
 As the bird wings and sings, 70
 Let us cry " All good things
 Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps
 soul ! "

xiii

Therefore I summon age
 To grant youth's heritage,
 Life's struggle having so far reached its term:
 Thence shall I pass, approved
 A man, for aye removed
 From the developed brute; a God though in the germ.

xiv

And I shall thereupon
 Take rest, ere I be gone
 Once more on my adventure brave and new:
 Fearless and unperplexed,
 When I wage battle next,
 What weapons to select, what armour to indue.

80

xv

Youth ended, I shall try
 My gain or loss thereby;
 Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold:
 And I shall weigh the same,
 Give life its praise or blame:
 Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.

90

xvi

For note, when evening shuts,
 A certain moment cuts
 The deed off, calls the glory from the grey:
 A whisper from the west
 Shoots—"Add this to the rest,
 Take it and try its worth: here dies another day."

XVII

So, still within this life,
 Though lifted o'er its strife,
 Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
 " This rage was right i' the main,
 That acquiescence vain :
 The Future I may face now I have proved the Past."

100

XVIII

For more is not reserved
 To man, with soul just nerved
 To act to-morrow what he learns to-day :
 Here, work enough to watch
 The Master work, and catch
 Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

XIX

As it was better, youth
 Should strive, through acts uncouth,
 Toward making, than repose on aught found made :
 So, better, age, exempt
 From strife, should know, than tempt
 Further. Thou waitedst age : wait death nor be afraid !

110

XX

Enough now, if the Right
 And Good and Infinite
 Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own,
 With knowledge absolute,
 Subject to no dispute
 From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

120

xxi

Be there, for once and all,
 Severed great minds from small,
 Announced to each his station in the Past!
 Was I, the world arraigned,
 Were they, my soul disdained,
 Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!

xxii

Now, who shall arbitrate?
 Ten men love what I hate,
 Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
 Ten, who in ears and eyes
 Match me: we all surmise,
 They, this thing, and I, that: whom shall my soul believe?

130

xxiii

Not on the vulgar mass
 Called "work," must sentence pass,
 Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
 O'er which, from level stand,
 The low world laid its hand,
 Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

xxiv

But all, the world's coarse thumb
 And finger failed to plumb,
 So passed in making up the main account;
 All instincts immature,
 All purposes unsure,
 That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:

140

xxv

Thoughts hardly to be packed
 Into a narrow act,
 Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
 All I could never be,
 All, men ignored in me,
 This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped. 150

xxvi

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
 That metaphor! and feel
 Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—
 Thou, to whom fools propound,
 When the wine makes its round,
 " Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize to-day!"

xxvii

Fool! All that is, at all,
 Lasts ever, past recall;
 Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
 What entered into thee, 160
That was, is, and shall be:
 Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

xxviii

He fixed thee mid this dance
 Of plastic circumstance,
 This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest:
 Machinery just meant
 To give thy soul its bent,
 Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

XXIX

What though the earlier grooves
 Which ran the laughing loves
 Around thy base, no longer pause and press?
 What though, about thy rim,
 Scull-things in order grim
 Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

170

XXX

Look not thou down but up!
 To uses of a cup,
 The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
 The new wine's foaming flow,
 The Master's lips a-glow!
 Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou with earth's
 wheel?

180

XXXI

But I need, now as then,
 Thee, God, who mouldest men;
 And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
 Did I,—to the wheel of life
 With shapes and colours rife,
 Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst:

XXXII

So, take and use Thy work:
 Amend what flaws may lurk,
 What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
 My times be in Thy hand!
 Perfect the cup as planned!
 Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

190

CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS; OR,
NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE ISLAND

"Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself."

[**W**ILL sprawl, now that the heat of day is best,
Flat on his belly in the pit's much mire,
With elbows wide, fists clenched to prop his chin.
And, while he kicks both feet in the cool slush,
And feels about his spine small eft-things course,
Run in and out each arm, and make him laugh :
And while above his head a pompion-plant,
Coating the cave-top as a brow its eye,
Creeps down to touch and tickle hair and beard,
And now a flower drops with a bee inside,
And now a fruit to snap at, catch and crunch,—
He looks out o'er yon sea which sunbeams cross
And recross till they weave a spider-web
(Meshes of fire, some great fish breaks at times)
And talks to his own self, howe'er he please,
Touching that other, whom his dam called God.
Because to talk about Him, vexes—ha,
Could He but know ! and time to vex is now,
When talk is safer than in winter-time.
Moreover Prosper and Miranda sleep
In confidence he drudges at their task,
And it is good to cheat the pair, and gibe,
Letting the rank tongue blossom into speech.]

10

20

Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos !
"Thinketh, He dwelleth i' the cold o' the moon.

'Thinketh He made it, with the sun to match,
 But not the stars ; the stars came otherwise ;
 Only made clouds, winds, meteors, such as that :
 Also this isle, what lives and grows thereon,
 And snaky sea which rounds and ends the same.

30

'Thinketh, it came of being ill at ease :
 He hated that He cannot change His cold,
 Nor cure its ache. 'Hath spied an icy fish
 That longed to 'scape the rock-stream where she lived,
 And thaw herself within the lukewarm brine
 O' the lazy sea her stream thrusts far amid,
 A crystal spike 'twixt two warm walls of wave ;
 Only, she ever sickened, found repulse
 At the other kind of water, not her life,
 (Green-dense and dim-delicious, bred o' the sun)
 Flounced back from bliss she was not born to breathe,
 And in her old bounds buried her despair,
 Hating and loving warmth alike : so He.

40

'Thinketh, He made thereat the sun, this isle,
 Trees and the fowls here, beast and creeping thing.
 Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a leech ;
 Yon auk, one fire-eye in a ball of foam,
 That floats and feeds ; a certain badger brown
 He hath watched hunt with that slant white-wedge eye
 By moonlight ; and the pie with the long tongue
 That pricks deep into oakwarts for a worm,
 And says a plain word when she finds her prize,
 But will not eat the ants ; the ants themselves
 That build a wall of seeds and settled stalks
 About their hole—He made all these and more,
 Made all we see, and us, in spite : how else ?
 He could not, Himself, make a second self
 To be His mate ; as well have made Himself :
 He would not make what He mislikes or slight,
 An eyesore to Him, or not worth His pains :

50

60

But did, in envy, listlessness or sport,
 Make what Himself would fain, in a manner, be—
 Weaker in most points, stronger in a few,
 Worthy, and yet mere playthings all the while,
 Things He admires and mocks too,—that is it.
 Because, so brave, so better though they be,
 It nothing skills if He begin to plague.
 Look now, I melt a gourd-fruit into mash,
 Add honeycomb and pods, I have perceived,
 Which bite like finches when they bill and kiss,—
 Then, when froth rises bladdery, drink up all,
 Quick, quick, till maggots scamper through my brain ;
 Last, throw me on my back i' the seeded thyme,
 And wanton, wishing I were born a bird.
 Put case, unable to be what I wish,
 I yet could make a live bird out of clay :
 Would not I take clay, pinch my Caliban
 Able to fly ?—for, there, see, he hath wings,
 And great comb like the hoopoe's to admire,
 And there, a sting to do his foes offence,
 There, and I will that he begin to live,
 Fly to yon rock-top, nip me off the horns
 Of grigs high up that make the merry din,
 Saucy through their veined wings, and mind me not.
 In which feat, if his leg snapped, brittle clay,
 And he lay stupid-like,—why, I should laugh ;
 And if he, spying me, should fall to weep,
 Beseech me to be good, repair his wrong,
 Bid his poor leg smart less or grow again,—
 Well, as the chance were, this might take or else
 Not take my fancy : I might hear his cry,
 And give the mankin three sound legs for one,
 Or pluck the other off, leave him like an egg,
 And lessoned he was mine and merely clay.
 Were this no pleasure, lying in the thyme,
 Drinking the mash, with brain become alive,
 Making and marring clay at will ? So He.

70

80

90

'Thinketh, such shows nor right nor wrong in Him,
Nor kind, nor cruel : He is strong and Lord.
'Am strong myself compared to yonder crabs
That march now from the mountain to the sea ;
'Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,
Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.
'Say, the first straggler that boasts purple spots
Shall join the file, one pincer twisted off ;
'Say, this bruised fellow shall receive a worm,
And two worms he whose nippers end in red ;
As it likes me each time, I do : so He.

Well then, 'supposeth He is good i' the main,
Placable if His mind and ways were guessed,
But rougher than His handiwork, be sure !
Oh, He hath made things worthier than Himself,
And envieith that, so helped, such things do more
Than He who made them ! What consoles but this ?
That they, unless through Him, do nought at all,
And must submit : what other use in things ?
'Hath cut a pipe of pithless elder-joint
That, blown through, gives exact the scream o' the jay
When from her wing you twitch the feathers blue :
Sound this, and little birds that hate the jay
Flock within stone's throw, glad their foe is hurt :
Put case such pipe could prattle and boast forsooth
" I catch the birds, I am the crafty thing,
" I make the cry my maker cannot make
" With his great round mouth ; he must blow through mine ! "
Would not I smash it with my foot ? So He.

But wherefore rough, why cold and ill at ease ?
Aha, that is a question ! Ask, for that,
What knows,—the something over Setebos
That made Him, or He, may be, found and fought,
Worsted, drove off and did to nothing, perchance.
There may be something quiet o'er His head,

Out of His reach, that feels nor joy nor grief,
Since both derive from weakness in some way.

I joy because the quails come ; would not joy
Could I bring quails here when I have a mind :
This Quiet, all it hath a mind to, doth.

'Esteemeth stars the outposts of its couch,
But never spends much thought nor care that way.

It may look up, work up,—the worse for those

140

It works on ! 'Careth but for Setebos

The many-handed as a cuttle-fish,

Who, making Himself feared through what He does,
Looks up, first, and perceives he cannot soar

To what is quiet and hath happy life ;

Next looks down here, and out of very spite

Makes this a bauble-world to ape yon real,

These good things to match those as hips do grapes.

'T is solace making baubles, ay, and sport.

Himself peeped late, eyed Prosper at his books

150

Careless and lofty, lord now of the isle :

Vexed, 'stitched a book of broad leaves, arrow-shaped,

Wrote thereon, he knows what, prodigious words ;

Has peeled a wand and called it by a name ;

Weareth at whiles for an enchanter's robe

The eyed skin of a supple oncelot ;

And hath an ounce sleeker than youngling mole,

A four-legged serpent he makes cower and couch,

Now snarl, now hold its breath and mind his eye,

And saith she is Miranda and my wife :

160

'Keeps for his Ariel a tall pouch-bill crane

He bids go wade for fish and straight disgorge ;

Also a sea-beast, lumpish, which he snared,

Blinded the eyes of, and brought somewhat tame,

And split its toe-webs, and now pens the drudge

In a hole o' the rock and calls him Caliban ;

A bitter heart that bides its time and bites.

'Plays thus at being Prosper in a way,

Taketh his mirth with make-believes : so He.

His dam held that the Quiet made all things
 Which Setebos vexed only : 'holds not so.
 Who made them weak, meant weakness He might vex.
 Had He meant other, while His hand was in,
 Why not make horny eyes no thorn could prick,
 Or plate my scalp with bone against the snow,
 Or overscale my flesh 'neath joint and joint,
 Like an orc's armour ? Ay,—so spoil His sport !
 He is the One now : only He doth all.

170

'Saith, He may like, perchance, what profits I him.
 Ay, himself loves what does him good ; but why ?

180

'Gets good no otherwise. This blinded beast
 Loves whoso places flesh-meat on his nose,
 But, had he eyes, would want no help, but hate
 Or love, just as it liked him : He hath eyes.

Also it pleaseth Setebos to work,
 Use all His hands, and exercise much craft,
 By no means for the love of what is worked.

'Tasteth, himself, no finer good i' the world
 When all goes right, in this safe summer-time,
 And he wants little, hungers, aches not much,
 Than trying what to do with wit and strength.

190

'Falls to make something : 'piled yon pile of turfs,
 And squared and stuck there squares of soft white chalk,
 And, with a fish-tooth, scratched a moon on each,
 And set up endwise certain spikes of tree,
 And crowned the whole with a sloth's skull a-top,
 Found dead i' the woods, too hard for one to kill.
 No use at all i' the work, for work's sole sake ;
 'Shall some day knock it down again : so He.

'Saith He is terrible : watch His feats in proof !
 One hurricane will spoil six good months' hope.
 He hath a spite against me, that I know,
 Just as He favours Prosper, who knows why ?
 So it is, all the same, as well I find.

200

'Wove wattles half the winter, fenced them firm
 With stone and stake to stop she-tortoises
 Crawling to lay their eggs here : well, one wave,
 Feeling the foot of Him upon its neck,
 Gaped as a snake does, lolled out its large tongue,
 And licked the whole labour flat : so much for spite.

210

'Saw a ball flame down late (yonder it lies)
 Where, half an hour before, I slept i' the shade :
 Often they scatter sparkles : there is force !

'Dug up a newt He may have envied once
 And turned to stone, shut up inside a stone.

Please Him and hinder this ?—What Prosper does ?

Aha, if He would tell me how ! Not He !

There is the sport : discover how or die !

All need not die, for of the things o' the isle

Some flee afar, some dive, some run up trees ;

220

Those at His mercy,—why, they please Him most

When . . . when . . . well, never try the same way twice !

Repeat what act has pleased, He may grow wroth.

You must not know His ways, and play Him off,

Sure of the issue. 'Doth the like himself :

'Spareth a squirrel that it nothing fears

But steals the nut from underneath my thumb,

And when I threat, bites stoutly in defence :

'Spareth an urchin that, contrariwise,

Curls up into a ball, pretending death

230

For fright at my approach : the two ways please.

But what would move my choler more than this,

That either creature counted on its life

To-morrow and next day and all days to come,

Saying, forsooth, in the inmost of its heart,

" Because he did so yesterday with me,

" And otherwise with such another brute,

" So must he do henceforth and always."—Ay ?

"Would teach the reasoning couple what "must" means !

'Doth as he likes, or wherefore Lord ? So He.

240

'Conceiveth all things will continue thus,
 And we shall have to live in fear of Him
 So long as He lives, keep His strength : no change,
 If He have done His best, make no new world
 To please Him more, so leave off watching this,—
 If He surprise not even the Quiet's self
 Some strange day,—or, suppose, grow into it
 As grubs grow butterflies : else, here are we,
 And there is He, and nowhere help at all.

'Believeth with the life, the pain shall stop. 250
 His dam held different, that after death
 He both plagued enemies and feasted friends :
 Idly ! He doth His worst in this our life,
 Giving just respite lest we die through pain,
 Saving last pain for worst,—with which, an end.
 Meanwhile, the best way to escape His ire
 Is, not to seem too happy. 'Sees, himself,
 Yonder two flies, with purple films and pink,
 Bask on the pompon-bell above : kills both.
 'Sees two black painful beetles roll their ball
 On head and tail as if to save their lives : 260
 Moves them the stick away they strive to clear.
 Even so, 'would have Him misconceive, suppose
 This Caliban strives hard and ails no less,
 And always, above all else, envies Him ;
 Wherefore he mainly dances on dark nights,
 Moans in the sun, gets under holes to laugh,
 And never speaks his mind save housed as now :
 Outside, 'groans, curses. If He caught me here,
 O'erheard this speech, and asked " What chucklest at ? " 270
 'Would, to appease Him, cut a finger off,
 Or of my three kid yearlings burn the best,
 Or let the toothsome apples rot on tree,
 Or push my tame beast for the orc to taste :
 While myself lit a fire, and made a song
 And sung it, " *What I hate, be consecrate*

“ To celebrate Thee and Thy state, no mate

“ For Thee ; what see for envy in poor me ? ”

Hoping the while, since evils sometimes mend,

Warts rub away and sores are cured with slime,

280

That some strange day, will either the Quiet catch

And conquer Setebos, or likelier He

Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die.

[What, what ? A curtain o'er the world at once !

Crickets stop hissing ; not a bird—or, yes,

There scuds His raven that has told Him all !

It was fool's play, this prattling ! Ha ! The wind

Shoulders the pillared dust, death's house o' the move,

And fast invading fires begin ! White blaze—

A tree's head snaps—and there, there, there, there, there, 290

His thunder follows ! Fool to gibe at Him !

Lo ! 'Lieth flat and loveth Setebos !

'Maketh his teeth meet through his upper lip,

Will let those quails fly, will not eat this month

One little mess of whelks, so he may 'scape !]

PROSPICE

FEAR death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
 The mist in my face,
 When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
 I am nearing the place,
 The power of the night, the press of the storm.
 The post of the foe;
 Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
 Yet the strong man must go:
 For the journey is done and the summit attained,
 And the barriers fall,
 Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
 The reward of it all.
 I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
 The best and the last!
 I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forebore,
 And bade me creep past.
 No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
 The heroes of old,
 Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
 Of pain, darkness and cold.
 For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
 The black minute's at end,
 And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
 Shall dwindle, shall blend,
 Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain
 Then a light, then thy breast,
 O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
 And with God be the rest!

10

20

A FACE

IF one could have that little head of hers
Painted upon a background of pale gold,
Such as the Tuscan's early art prefers!

No shade encroaching on the matchless mould
Of those two lips, which should be opening soft

In the pure profile; not as when she laughs,
For that spoils all: but rather as if aloft

Yon hyacinth, she loves so, leaned its staff's
Burthen of honey-coloured buds to kiss
And capture 'twixt the lips apart for this.

Then her lithe neck, three fingers might surround,
How it should waver on the pale gold ground
Up to the fruit-shaped, perfect chin it lifts!

I know, Correggio loves to mass, in rifts
Of heaven, his angel faces, orb on orb
Breaking its outline, burning shades absorb:
But these are only massed there, I should think,

Waiting to see some wonder momently
Grow out, stand full, fade slow against the sky
(That's the pale ground you'd see this sweet face by), 20
All heaven, meanwhile, condensed into one eye
Which fears to lose the wonder, should it wink.

FROM "THE RING AND THE BOOK"

O LYRIC LOVE

O LYRIC Love, half angel and half bird
And all a wonder and a wild desire,—
Boldest of hearts that ever braved the sun,
Took sanctuary within the holier blue,
And sang a kindred soul out to his face,—
Yet human at the red-ripe of the heart—
When the first summons from the darkling earth
Reached thee amid thy chambers, blanched their blue,
And bared them of the glory—to drop down,
To toil for man, to suffer or to die,—
This is the same voice: can thy soul know change?
Hail then, and hearken from the realms of help!
Never may I commence my song, my due
To God who best taught song by gift of thee,
Except with bent head and beseeching hand—
That still, despite the distance and the dark,
What was, again may be; some interchange
Of grace, some splendour once thy very thought,
Some benediction anciently thy smile:
—Never conclude, but raising hand and head
Thither where eyes, that cannot reach, yet yearn
For all hope, all sustainment, all reward,
Their utmost up and on,—so blessing back
In those thy realms of help, that heaven thy home,
Some whiteness which, I judge, thy face makes proud,
Some wanness where, I think, thy foot may fall!

10

20

PACCHIAROTTO, AND HOW HE WORKED IN DISTEMPER: WITH OTHER POEMS

HOUSE

I

SHALL I sonnet-sing you about myself?
Do I live in a house you would like to see?
Is it scant of gear, has it store of pelf?
“Unlock my heart with a sonnet-key?”

II

Invite the world, as my betters have done?
“Take notice: this building remains on view,
Its suites of reception every one,
Its private apartment and bedroom too;

III

“For a ticket, apply to the Publisher.”
No: thanking the public, I must decline.
A peep through my window, if folk prefer;
But, please you, no foot over threshold of mine!

10

IV

I have mixed with a crowd and heard free talk
In a foreign land where an earthquake chanced:
And a house stood gaping, nought to baulk
Man's eye wherever he gazed or glanced.

V

The whole of the frontage shaven sheer,
The inside gaped: exposed to day,
Right and wrong and common and queer,
Bare, as the palm of your hand, it lay.

20

VI

The owner? Oh, he had been crushed, no doubt!
 " Odd tables and chairs for a man of wealth!
 What a parcel of musty old books about!
 He smoked,—no wonder he lost his health!

VII

" I doubt if he bathed before he dressed.
 A brasier?—the pagan, he burned perfumes!
 You see it is proved, what the neighbours guessed:
 His wife and himself had separate rooms."

VIII

Friends, the goodman of the house at least
 Kept house to himself till an earthquake came:
 "T is the fall of its frontage permits you feast
 On the inside arrangement you praise or blame.

30

IX

Outside should suffice for evidence:
 And whoso desires to penetrate
 Deeper, must dive by the spirit-sense—
 No optics like yours, at any rate!

X

" Hoity toity! A street to explore,
 Your house the exception! '*With this same key*
Shakespeare unlocked his heart,' once more!"
 Did Shakespeare? If so, the less Shakespeare he!

40

HERVÉ RIEL

I

ON the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred ninety-two,
 Did the English fight the French,—woe to France!
 And, the thirty-first of May, helter-skelter through the blue,
 Like a crowd of frightened porpoises a shoal of sharks pursue,
 Came crowding ship on ship to Saint-Malo on the Rance,
 With the English fleet in view.

II

"T was the squadron that escaped, with the victor in full chase;
 First and foremost of the drove, in his great ship, Damfre-
 ville;
 Close on him fled, great and small,
 Twenty-two good ships in all; 10
 And they signalled to the place
 "Help the winners of a race!
 Get us guidance, give us harbour, take us quick—or, quicker
 still,
 Here 's the English can and will!"

III

Then the pilots of the place put out brisk and leapt on board;
 "Why, what hope or chance have ships like these to pass?"
 laughed they:
 "Rocks to starboard, rocks to port, all the passage scarred and
 scored,—
 Shall the '*Formidable*' here, with her twelve and eighty guns,
 Think to make the river-mouth by the single narrow way,
 Trust to enter—where 't is ticklish for a craft of twenty tons, 20
 7 P

And with flow at full beside?
Now, 't is slackest ebb of tide.
Reach the mooring? Rather say,
While rock stands or water runs,
Not a ship will leave the bay!"

IV

Then was called a council straight.
Brief and bitter the debate :
“ Here 's the English at our heels ; would you have them take in
tow
All that 's left us of the fleet, linked together stern and bow,
For a prize to Plymouth Sound ? 30
Better run the ships aground ! ”
(Ended Damfreville his speech.)
“ Not a minute more to wait !
Let the Captains all and each
Shove ashore, then blow up, burn the vessels on the beach !
France must undergo her fate.

7

“ Give the word ! ” But no such word
Was ever spoke or heard ;
For up stood, for out stepped, for in struck amid all these
—A Captain ? A Lieutenant ? A Mate—first, second,
third ? 40
No such man of mark, and meet
With his betters to compete !
But a simple Breton sailor pressed by Tourville for the fleet,
A poor coasting-pilot he, Hervé Riel the Croisickese.

VI

And, "What mockery or malice have we here?" cries Hervé Riel:
"Are you mad, you Malouins? Are you cowards, fools, or rogues?"

Talk to me of rocks and shoals, me who took the soundings,
tell

On my fingers every bank, every shallow, every swell

"Twixt the offing here and Grève where the river disem-
bogues?

Are you bought by English gold? Is it love the lying 's for? 50
Morn and eve, night and day,

Have I piloted your bay,

Entered free and anchored fast at the foot of Solidor.

Burn the fleet and ruin France? That were worse than fifty
Hogues!

Sirs, they know I speak the truth! Sirs, believe me there 's
a way!

Only let me lead the line,

Have the biggest ship to steer,

Get this '*Formidable*' clear,

Make the others follow mine,

And I lead them, most and least, by a passage I know well, 60
Right to Solidor past Grève,

And there lay them safe and sound;

And if one ship misbehave,—

—Keel so much as grate the ground,

Why, I 've nothing but my life,—here 's my head!" cries
Hervé Riel.

VII

Not a minute more to wait.

"Steer us in, then, small and great!

"Take the helm, lead the line, save the squadron!" cried its
chief.

Captains, give the sailor place!

He is Admiral, in brief.

Still the north-wind, by God's grace!

See the noble fellow's face

As the big ship, with a bound,
Clears the entry like a hound,

Keeps the passage, as its inch of way were the wide sea's profound!

See, safe thro' shoal and rock,

How they follow in a flock,

Not a ship that misbehaves, not a keel that grates the ground,

Not a spar that comes to grief!

The peril, see, is past.

80

All are harboured to the last,

And just as Hervé Riel hollas "Anchor!"—sure as fate

Up the English come,—too late!

VIII

So, the storm subsides to calm:

They see the green trees wave

On the heights o'erlooking Grève.

Hearts that bled are stanch'd with balm.

"Just our rapture to enhance,

Let the English rake the bay,

Gnash their teeth and glare askance

90

As they cannonade away!

'Neath rampired Solidor pleasant riding on the Rance!"

How hope succeeds despair on each Captain's countenance!

Out burst all with one accord,

"This is Paradise for Hell!

Let France, let France's King

Thank the man that did the thing!"

What a shout, and all one word,

"Hervé Riel!"

As he stepped in front once more,

100

Not a symptom of surprise

In the frank blue Breton eyes,

Just the same man as before.

IX

Then said Damfreville, "My friend,
I must speak out at the end,

Though I find the speaking hard,
Praise is deeper than the lips:
You have saved the King his ships,
 You must name your own reward.

'Faith, our sun was near eclipse!
Demand whate'er you will,
France remains your debtor still.
Ask to heart's content and have! or my name's not Dampfreville."

110

x

Then a beam of fun outbroke
On the bearded mouth that spoke,
As the honest heart laughed through
Those frank eyes of Breton blue:
" Since I needs must say my say,
 Since on board the duty's done,
 And from Malo Roads to Croisic Point, what is it but a
 run?—

120

Since 't is ask and have, I may—
 Since the others go ashore—
Come! A good whole holiday!
Leave to go and see my wife, whom I call the Belle Aurore!"
That he asked and that he got,—nothing more.

xi

Name and deed alike are lost:
Not a pillar nor a post
 In his Croisic keeps alive thefeat as it befell;
Not a head in white and black
 On a single fishing-smack,
In memory of the man but for whom had gone to wrack
 All that France saved from the fight whence England bore
 the bell.
Go to Paris: rank on rank

130

Search the heroes flung pell-mell
On the Louvre, face and flank!

You shall look long enough ere you come to Hervé Riel.
So, for better and for worse,
Hervé Riel, accept my verse!
In my verse, Hervé Riel, do thou once more
Save the squadron, honour France, love thy wife the Belle
Aurore!

DRAMATIC IDYLS

PHEIDIPIIDES

Χαίρετε, νικῶμεν

FIRST I salute this soil of the blessed, river and rock!
Gods of my birthplace, dæmons and heroes, honour to all!
Then I name thee, claim thee for our patron, co-equal in praise
—Ay, with Zeus the Defender, with Her of the ægis and spear!
Also, ye of the bow and the buskin, praised be your peer,
Now, henceforth and forever,—O latest to whom I upraise
Hand and heart and voice! For Athens, leave pasture and
flock!

Present to help, potent to save, Pan—patron I call!

Archons of Athens, topped by the tettix, see, I return!
See, 't is myself here standing alive, no spectre that speaks! 10
Crowned with the myrtle, did you command me, Athens and you,
"Run, Pheidippides, run and race, reach Sparta for aid!
Persia has come, we are here, where is She?" Your command
I obeyed,
Ran and raced: like stubble, some field which a fire runs
through,
Was the space between city and city: two days, two nights did
I burn
Over the hills, under the dales, down pits and up peaks.

Into their midst I broke: breath served but for "Persia has
come!"
Persia bids Athens proffer slaves'-tribute, water and earth;
Razed to the ground is Eretria—but Athens, shall Athens sink,
Drop into dust and die—the flower of Hellas utterly die, 20
Die, with the wide world spitting at Sparta, the stupid, the
stander-by?

Answer me quick, what help, what hand do you stretch o'er
destruction's brink?
How,—when? No care for my limbs!—there's lightning in
all and some—
Fresh and fit your message to bear, once lips give it birth!"

O my Athens—Sparta love thee? Did Sparta respond?
Every face of her leered in a furrow of envy, mistrust,
Malice,—each eye of her gave me its glitter of gratified hate!
Gravely they turned to take counsel, to cast for excuses. I stood
Quivering,—the limbs of me fretting as fire frets, an inch from
dry wood:
"Persia has come, Athens asks aid, and still they debate?" 30
Thunder, thou Zeus! Athené, are Spartans a quarry beyond
Swing of thy spear? Phoibos and Artemis, clang them 'Ye
must'!"

No bolt launched from Olumpos! Lo, their answer at last!
"Has Persia come,—does Athens ask aid,—may Sparta
befriend?
Nowise precipitate judgment—too weighty the issue at stake!
Count we no time lost time which lags through respect to the
Gods!
Ponder that precept of old, 'No warfare, whatever the odds
In your favour, so long as the moon, half-orbed, is unable to
take
Full-circle her state in the sky!' Already she rounds to it fast:
Athens must wait, patient as we—who judgment suspend." 40

Athens,—except for that sparkle,—thy name, I had mouldered
to ash!
That sent a blaze through my blood; off, off and away was I back,
—Not one word to waste, one look to lose on the false and the
vile!
Yet "O Gods of my land!" I cried, as each hillock and plain,
Wood and stream, I knew, I named, rushing past them again,

“ Have ye kept faith, proved mindful of honours we paid you erewhile ?

Vain was the filleted victim, the fulsome libation ! Too rash Love in its choice, paid you so largely service so slack !

“ Oak and olive and bay,—I bid you cease to enwreathe Brows made bold by your leaf ! Fade at the Persian’s foot, 50 You that, our patrons were pledged, should never adorn a slave ! Rather I hail thee, Parnes,—trust to thy wild waste tract ! Treeless, herbless, lifeless mountain ! What matter if slacked My speed may hardly be, for homage to crag and to cave No deity deigns to drape with verdure ?—at least I can breathe, Fear in thee no fraud from the blind, no lie from the mute ! ”

Such my cry as, rapid, I ran over Parnes’ ridge ;
Gully and gap I clambered and cleared till, sudden, a bar Jutted, a stoppage of stone against me, blocking the way. Right ! for I minded the hollow to traverse, the fissure across :

60

“ Where I could enter, there I depart by ! Night in the fosse ? Athens to aid ? Tho’ the dive were through Erebos, thus I obey—

Out of the day dive, into the day as bravely arise ! No bridge Better ! ”—when—ha ! what was it I came on, of wonders that are ?

There, in the cool of a cleft, sat he—majestical Pan ! Ivy drooped wanton, kissed his head, moss cushioned his hoof : All the great God was good in the eyes grave-kindly—the curl Carved on the bearded cheek, amused at a mortal’s awe, As, under the human trunk, the goat-thighs grand I saw.

“ Halt, Pheidippides ! ”—halt I did, my brain of a whirl : 70 “ Hither to me ! Why pale in my presence ? ” he gracious began :

“ How is it,—Athens, only in Hellas, holds me aloof ?

“ Athens, she only, rears me no fane, makes me no feast ! Wherefore ? Than I what godship to Athens more helpful of old ?

Ay, and still, and forever her friend ! Test Pan, trust me !
 Go, bid Athens take heart, laugh Persia to scorn, have faith
 In the temples and tombs ! Go, say to Athens, ' The Goat-God
 saith :
 When Persia—so much as strews not the soil—is cast in the
 sea,
 Then praise Pan who fought in the ranks with your most and
 least,
 Goat-thigh to greaved-thigh, made one cause with the free and
 the bold ! ' 80

" Say Pan saith : ' Let this, foreshowing the place, be the
 pledge ! ' "
 (Gay, the liberal hand held out this herbage I bear
 —Fennel—I grasped it a-tremble with dew—whatever it
 bode)
 " While, as for thee . . . " But enough ! He was gone. If I
 ran hitherto—
 Be sure that, the rest of my journey, I ran no longer, but flew.
 Parnes to Athens—earth no more, the air was my road :
 Here am I back. Praise Pan, we stand no more on the razor's
 edge !
 Pan for Athens, Pan for me ! I too have a guerdon rare !

Then spoke Miltiades. " And thee, best runner of Greece,
 Whose limbs did duty indeed,—what gift is promised
 thyself ? " 90
 Tell it us straightway,—Athens the mother demands of her
 son ! "
 Rosily blushed the youth : he paused : but, lifting at length
 His eyes from the ground, it seemed as he gathered the rest of
 his strength
 Into the utterance—" Pan spoke thus : ' For what thou hast
 done
 Count on a worthy reward ! Henceforth be allowed thee re-
 lease
 From the racer's toil, no vulgar reward in praise or in pelf ! '

“ I am bold to believe, Pan means reward the most to my mind !
 Fight I shall, with our foremost, wherever this fennel may
 grow,—

Pound—Pan helping us—Persia to dust, and, under the deep,
 Whelm her away for ever ; and then,—no Athens to save,— 100
 Marry a certain maid, I know keeps faith to the brave,—
 Hie to my house and home : and, when my children shall creep
 Close to my knees,—recount how the God was awful yet kind,
 Promised their sire reward to the full—rewarding him—so ! ”

Unforeseeing one ! Yes, he fought on the Marathon day :
 So, when Persia was dust, all cried “ To Akropolis !
 Run, Pheidippides, one race more ! the meed is thy due !
 ‘ Athens is saved, thank Pan,’ go shout ! ” He flung down his
 shield,

Ran like fire once more : and the space 'twixt the Fennel-field
 And Athens was stubble again, a field which a fire runs
 through,

Till in he broke : “ Rejoice, we conquer ! ” Like wine through
 clay,

Joy in his blood bursting his heart, he died—the bliss !

So, to this day, when friend meets friend, the word of salute
 Is still “ Rejoice ! ”—his word which brought rejoicing indeed.
 So is Pheidippides happy for ever,—the noble strong man
 Who could race like a God, bear the face of a God, whom a
 God loved so well ;

He saw the land saved he had helped to save, and was suffered
 to tell

Such tidings, yet never decline, but, gloriously as he began,
 So to end gloriously—once to shout, thereafter be mute :
 “ Athens is saved ! ”—Pheidippides dies in the shout for his
 meed.

FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

EPILOGUE

O H, Love—no, Love ! All the noise below, Love,
Groanings all and moanings—none of Life I lose !
All of Life's a cry just of weariness and woe, Love—
“ Hear at least, thou happy one ! ” How can I, Love, but
choose ?

Only, when I do hear, sudden circle round me
—Much as when the moon's might frees a space from cloud—
Iridescent splendours : gloom—would else confound me—
Barriered off and banished far—bright-edged the blackest
shroud !

Thronging through the cloud-rift, whose are they, the faces
Faint revealed yet sure divined, the famous ones of old ? 10
“ What ”—they smile—“ our names, our deeds so soon erases
Time upon his tablet where Life's glory lies enrolled ?

“ Was it for mere fool's play, make-believe and mumming,
So we battled it like men, not boylike sulked or whined ?
Each of us heard clang God's ‘ Come ! ’ and each was coming :
Soldiers all, to forward-face, not sneaks to lag behind !

“ How of the field's fortune ? That concerned our Leader !
Led, we struck our stroke nor cared for doings left and right :
Each as on his sole head, failer or succeeder,
Lay the blame or lit the praise : no care for cowards : fight ! ” 20

Then the cloud-rift broadens, spanning earth that 's under,
Wide our world displays its worth, man's strife and strife's
success :

All the good and beauty, wonder crowning wonder,
Till my heart and soul applaud perfection, nothing less.

Only, at heart's utmost joy and triumph, terror
Sudden turns the blood to ice : a chill wind disencharms
All the late enchantment ! What if all be error—
If the halo irised round my head were, Love, thine arms ?

ASOLANDO

EPILOGUE

AT the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time,
When you set your fancies free,
Will they pass to where—by death, fools think, imprisoned—
Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved so ?
—Pity me ?

Oh to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken !

What had I on earth to do
With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly ?
Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drivel
—Being—who ?

10

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time
Greet the unseen with a cheer !
Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,
“ Strive and thrive ! ” cry “ Speed,—fight on, fare ever
There as here ! ”

20

NOTES

(The various pages of the text to which the notes refer are indicated by the heavy face numbers in the headlines)

SELECTIONS

SONGS FROM "PARACELSIUS" (1835)

I. "HEAP CASSIA, SANDAL-BUDS . . ."

This song is taken from Part IV. of *Paracelsus*. In this long semi-narrative, semi-dramatic poem, Browning tells the story of the spiritual development of Paracelsus, the German Renaissance scholar and physician (1490-1541), whose career may be compared with that of Faustus.

Part IV., *Paracelsus Aspires*, tells how Paracelsus bids farewell to his early ideals of knowledge and asceticism, adding wistfully

Still, dreams
They were, so let them vanish, yet in beauty
If that may be. Stay: thus they pass in song!

Then follows this song in which, after the manner of Keats, Browning incarnates the beauty of the scholar's "lovely fancies" in a wealth of Eastern perfumes.

1 cassia: a fragrant shrub, a species of cinnamon.

1 sandal-buds: the sandal-tree is a small East Indian tree, similar to the privet, and noted for its fragrance.

2 labdanum: a resinous exudation from a Spanish shrub, once used as a perfume. The alternative form "ladanum" gives us the word "laudanum," but there is no real connection between the opium drug and the gum here mentioned.

2 aloe-balls: solidified resin from the aloe-tree.

3 nard: or "spikenard," an aromatic plant or the ointment prepared from it. (Cf. *Luke*, vii. 37.)

II. "THUS THE MAYNE GLIDETH . . ."

This exquisite descriptive lyric is taken from *Paracelsus*, Part V., and is recited by Festus to Paracelsus as Paracelsus lies on his death-bed. Passages of quiet, pastoral beauty are not common in Browning, although other examples may be found (cf. e.g., passages in *Pauline*, or *Love among the Ruins*). This is one of the most perfect, alike in music and in descriptive quality.

19 shrew-mouse : a small insectivorous animal, which is long-snouted like a mouse, but is not truly a rodent.

SONGS FROM " PIPPA PASSES " (1841)

In the lyrical drama, *Pippa Passes*, Browning tells the story of a young girl Pippa, a poor Italian silk-winder, and of her annual one day's holiday. As she passes singing on this day through her town of Asolo, her songs are heard successively by four groups of people at critical moments in their lives. Mrs Orr tells us that the poem was suggested to Browning as he strolled alone one day in Dulwich wood : "the image flashed upon him of one walking thus alone through life ; one apparently too obscure to leave a trace of his or her passage, yet exercising a lasting though unconscious influence at every step of it."

I. The first song is heard by the wealthy Ottima and her paramour Sebald who has just murdered Ottima's elderly husband. The song brings a sense of shame and remorse to the two lovers.

This song has often been foolishly used to show that Browning's optimism is indiscriminate.

II. The second song is in dramatic form. The first part of each stanza is the lament of a page who has set his affections upon his queen, whom fortune has fixed so far above him ; the latter part of each stanza indicates the background of the page's song.

6 Kate the Queen : Katharine Cornaro, a Venetian heiress, married the king of Cyprus, and after his death became sovereign. She abdicated the throne in 1489 and Cyprus came under the government of the Venetian republic. Katharine was granted an estate and palace at Asolo, the scene of *Pippa Passes*.

18 jesses : a jess was a leather or silk strap attached to the legs of a hawk to fasten it to the leash attached to the falconer's wrist.

DRAMATIC LYRICS

CAVALIER TUNES (1842)

These three songs are amongst the most spirited of Browning's compositions. The music of each is distinguished from the others, and is expressive of the supposed " scene " of the poem—on the march, in the tavern and on horseback. These songs were doubtless suggested to Browning by his study of the history of the Civil War in connection with his drama *Sirrafford*, 1837.

I. MARCHING ALONG

1 Kentish Sir Byng : the character is imaginary.

7 Pym : John Pym (1584-1643), leader of the Parliamentary or Roundhead party in the Long Parliament, which launched the active opposition to Charles I.

7 carles : usually " carl," a rustic or rough fellow. The word is of O.E. origin, and allied with " churl."

8 parles : speeches. A coinage of Browning's from " parley " or French *parler*.

14 Hampden : John Hampden (1594-1643), the notable Puritan leader, killed in the battle of Chalgrove Field.

15 Hazelrig, Fiennes, young Harry : three noted Parliamentary leaders. Sir Arthur Hazelrig (. . . -1661) was imprisoned by Charles II. and died in the Tower. Nathaniel Fiennes (1609-60), a close friend of Oliver Cromwell. Sir Henry Vane the Younger (1612-62), one of the finest spirits of the Puritans, Governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1636-37, and beheaded by Charles II. in 1662. (Cf. Milton's sonnet addressed to him.)

16 Rupert : Prince Rupert of Bavaria (1619-82), son of Elizabeth, daughter of James I., and commander of the Royalist cavalry.

20 snarls : curs (?). " Snarl " as a substantive really means " snare "; but the word as used here seems to be a coinage of Browning's from the verb " to snarl."

23 Nottingham : the Civil War began when Charles I. set up his standard at Nottingham on August 22nd, 1642.

II. GIVE A ROUSE

16 Noll : a nickname or term of affection derived from " Oliver "; here applied in contempt to Oliver Cromwell.

III. BOOT AND SADDLE

The speaker in this poem is a Royalist nobleman who is returning home to relieve his castle, at present defended against the Roundheads, by his wife Gertrude.

10 Castle Brancepeth : a castle of the Nevilles, a few miles south-west of Durham : there is no record, however, of such an action's having taken place there in the Civil War.

THE LOST LEADER (1845)

This poem forms a natural counterpart to *The Patriot*. Whereas in the latter poem the patriot, despite a fickle populace, remains true to his principles, the " lost leader " is represented as forsaking the ideals of liberty which he had formerly supported. Browning seems to have had Wordsworth chiefly in mind in writing this poem. Wordsworth, like Coleridge, was an ardent liberal, and even a republican in his early manhood ; but, not advancing with the times, became a conservative in politics, if not in social doctrine, in later years, and treated Browning's republican sympathies with contempt. At the same time, the poem does not apply in all its details to Wordsworth,

and the truth on this whole question is best given in the words of a letter written to Dr Grosart in 1875:

19, Warwick Crescent, W.,
February 24th, 1875.

DEAR MR. GROSART,

I have been asked the question you now address me with, and as duly answered, I can't remember how many times. There is no sort of objection to one more assurance, or rather confession, on my part, that I *did* in my hasty youth presume to use the great and venerable personality of Wordsworth as a sort of printer's model: one from which this or the other particular feature may be selected and turned to account. Had I intended more—above all, such a boldness as portraying the entire man—I should not have talked about 'handfuls of silver and bits of ribbon.' These never influenced the change of politics in the great poet—whose defection, nevertheless, accompanied as it was by a regular face-about of his especial party, was, to my private apprehension, and even mature consideration, an event to deplore. But, just as in the tapestry on my wall I can recognise figures which have *struck out* a fancy, on occasion, that though truly enough thus derived, yet would be preposterous as a copy; so, though I dare not deny the original of my little poem, I altogether refuse to have it considered as the 'very effigies' of such a moral and intellectual superiority.

Faithfully yours,

ROBERT BROWNING.

(Grosart's edition of
Wordsworth's *Prose Works* (1876), I. xxxvii.)

13 Shakespeare: Milton, Burns and Shelley all gave expression to democratic sentiments, but it is strange that Browning should include Shakespeare with these. Later, Shakespeare became for Browning the supreme type of the dramatic genius, not revealing himself in his works (cf. *House*). Perhaps Browning had in mind here Wordsworth's own sonnet in which he says:

We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spake . . .

(Sonnets dedicated to National
Independence and Liberty, Part I. xvi.)

HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX (1845)

This poem, Browning tells us, was conceived on his first voyage to Italy in 1838, when he had encountered stormy weather, and "had been long enough at sea to appreciate even the fancy of a gallop on the back of a certain good horse 'York,' then in my stable at home." Browning has certainly achieved in his poem a vivid suggestion of the galloping of horses, as well as giving us an exciting story which does not allow our

interest to flag, and which moves steadily to a splendid climax in Stanza ix. Equally remarkable are a score of lively descriptive touches which occur throughout the poem. (Cf. e.g., ll. 15, 20, 24, 25, 39.)

When we remember these fine poetic qualities it matters little that no definite historical foundation can be found for the story, or that some of the towns mentioned do not lie on the route from Ghent to Aix, or that the ride of 120 miles in some 12 hours, without change of steed, is a well-nigh impossible feat. If Browning's date of 16— is to be accepted, the incident is presumably supposed to take place during the struggle of the Nederlands against Spain in the Thirty Years' War.

— Ghent: the important Belgian commercial and cathedral city, situated on the Scheldt.

— Aix: Aix-la-Chapelle or Aachen, cathedral city in the Rhineland, 44 miles from Cologne.

10 Pique: the front point of the saddle.

14 Lokeren: on the river Durme in Belgium.

15 Boom: south of Antwerp in Belgium.

16 Duffeld: 6 miles east of Boom.

17 Mecheln: 10 miles east of Hasselt.

19 Aershot: in Belgium; province of South Brabant.

31 Hasselt: in Belgium; province of Limburg.

38 Looz: 10 miles south of Hasselt.

38 Tongres: in the province of Limburg, 12 miles north of Liège.

41 Dalhem: half-way between Tongres and Aix, and, therefore, some 16 miles from Aix. It would be impossible to see Aix or its cathedral from Dalhem.

49 buff-coat: a soldier's jerkin made of a pale yellow pliant leather.

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR (1842)

Another poem of horsemanship, but a great contrast to the preceding. The swift action of the ride from Ghent to Aix is here replaced by the weary monotony of the desert ride. The regular swing of the horse is emphasized by the repetition of the double "As I ride," and the impression of monotony is conveyed by the use of the single monosyllabic rime in "ide," which is employed medially in five lines of each stanza as well as terminally in all the lines.

— Metidja: a plain in Algeria, near the coast and south-west of Algiers. Browning sailed along this coast to Italy in 1838.

— Abd-el-Kadr: a learned and distinguished Arab chief who headed the rising against the French in 1831.

The French conquered Algiers in 1830, and the subsequent outbreaks on the part of the natives were punished with such great severity that the whole province rose in arms, under

Abd-el-Kadr, against the French. Abd-el-Kadr was able to defeat the invaders in 1835, but was not able to maintain his resistance, and after hiding in the mountains gave himself up to the French in 1847; he was imprisoned in various places, and then liberated by Louis Napoleon in 1852.

The speaker in the poem is an Arab who is riding to join Abd-el-Kadr in his disastrous campaign of 1842.

5 double-eyed : possessed of second sight.

38 the Prophet and the Bride : Mahomet and his favourite wife Ayesha.

GARDEN FANCIES

Hood's Magazine, 1844, and Dramatic Romances and Lyrics, 1845

I. THE FLOWER'S NAME

II. SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS

These are two contrasted studies in garden-settings. In the first the flowers and plants of the garden recall to the lover the slight actions and chance words of his mistress; in the second we have the student's humorous revenge on a pedantic writer, and an excellent picture of the more fantastic and gruesome side of the life of the garden. Browning fully revels in the humour and grotesque effect of his description. (See Stanza vii., and compare the more serious grotesque in *Childe Roland*. Cf. also Introduction, p. xxiii.)

II. SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS

— Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis : an imaginary botanical pedant. The name means Sibrandus of Aschafnaburg, and Browning found it in Wanley's *Wonders of the Little World*, (1676) Book VI., ch. vi. § 7.

7 matin-prime : an ecclesiastical term for the first hour after sunrise.

10 arbute : or "arbutus," a genus of trees and shrubs belonging to the natural order Ericaceae, which includes the heaths, rhododendron, etc.

10 laurustine : an evergreen shrub with dark green leaves, bearing white clusters of flowers in late winter or early spring.

19 pont-levis : (French) a draw-bridge.

30 Chablis : a white wine of Burgundy.

32 Rabelais : François Rabelais (c. 1490-1553), French humorist, and author of *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*.

38 de profundis, accentibus lætis, cantate ! : out of the depths, with joyful accents, sing !

50 toused : pulled ; cf. M.E. "tosen" and the modern "tousle" and "tease."

51 eft : a newt or lizard.

52 trover: a legal action concerning the finding of goods: here used probably to signify the goods found or the finder.

61 John Knox: (1505-72), famous Scottish divine and Reformer; a bitter opponent of Mary, Queen of Scots, and of the Papists.

SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER (1842)

One of Browning's numerous studies in the psychology of a perverted mind. The monk in this poem is perverted by hatred and jealousy of a fellow-monk. We listen to his reflections as he watches Brother Lawrence tending his garden. The realistic conclusion of the poem is especially to be noted, as showing the peculiar mixture of hatred and hypocritical ritualism in the speaker's character.

10 Salve tibil: hail to thee!

25, 27 Dolores, Sanchicha: Spanish girls' names.

31 Barbary corsair: a Barbary privateer or pirate.

39 the Arian: Arius (3rd-4th century, A.D.), whilst regarding Christ as the highest Type of humanity, denied His divinity. His followers were called Arians.

49 a great text: *Galatians*, iii. 10, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

The twenty-nine curses (and more) are set out in *Deuteronomy*, xxviii.—(Berdoe.)

56 a Manichee: a follower of Manes (A.D. ?-274), a Persian religious teacher who was regarded as a heretic. Manes tried to reconcile Christianity with his own philosophy, in which the Universe is regarded as a conflict between Light or Spirit, and Darkness or Matter.

60 Belial's gripe:

Belial came last, than whom a Spirit more lewd
Fell not from Heaven, or more gross to love
Vice for itself . . .

(*Paradise Lost*, I. 490 *et sq.*)

Sensuality is the vice which the monk most delights to impute to Brother Lawrence.

70 Hy, Zy, Hine: the words are imitative of the ringing of the Vesper bell.

71-72 Plena gratia Ave, Virgo!: hail, Virgin, full of grace!

MEETING AT NIGHT, PARTING AT MORNING (1845)

Two companion poems, of which the first is especially fine in its combination of natural beauty and realistic observation. The language is simple but peculiarly vivid and appropriate.

and in both poems the natural environment is symbolic of the mood of the poet.

SONG

“NAY BUT YOU, WHO DO NOT LOVE HER . . . (1845)

One of the most beautiful examples of the purely lyrical in Browning.

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY (1855)

With delightful dramatic humour Browning presents the point of view of an impoverished Person of Quality, whom his circumstances have compelled to live in the country. The whole poem is alive with colour and movement, and much of Browning's own love of nature comes out in the Italian's complaint. This poem may be compared and contrasted with *The Englishman in Italy*, and *Home-Thoughts from Abroad*.

4 by Bacchus : “per Bacco” is still a common oath in Italy.

29 conch : shell ; the figures described here form a common motive for fountain-sculpture.

42 Pulcinello-trumpet : Pulcinello, the traditional name given to the buffoon in companies of travelling players in Italy. Hence the Pulcinello-trumpet is the signal of the approach of such a company.

46 And beneath . . . : note the triple alliteration on “n,” “c,” and “l.”

52 seven swords : the seven swords, contrasting so strangely with the “pink gauze pown all spangles,” signify the “Seven Sorrows of Our Lady.”

56 what oil pays . . . : a reference to the tax levied in many continental cities on produce entering the city.

60 yellow candles : the yellow candles used in the Roman Catholic Church at funerals and in penitential processions.

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S (1855)

This poem is interesting alike for its recapture of the spirit of a dead age, the eighteenth century in Venice, and for the skilful suggestion in its rhythm of the musical form, a toccata for the clavichord, which is its subject.

— Toccata : a form of musical composition akin to the Fantasia or Impromptu. Its name means a “Touch-piece,” and it was intended to display the performer's touch or execution. It was characterized by a flowing movement, but lacked a definite theme. The Toccata was developed in Italy by Gabrieli (1557-1613), Merulo (1533-1604), and by Galuppi. It was Bach who raised the form to the position of an important musical form.

— Galuppi : Baldassare Galuppi (1706-85) was an Italian composer, famous in his own day, and the author of some fifty

operas besides shorter compositions. Most of his work is now generally forgotten. Galuppi spent some years in St Petersburg, and was in London from 1741-44. On his return to Venice he became organist of St Mark's, the famous cathedral referred to in 1. 6.

6 where the Doges . . . : the chief magistrate of the Venetian Republic was called the Doge (from Latin *dux*). It was the annual custom on Ascension Day for the Doge to perform the ceremony of wedding Venice to the Adriatic by throwing a ring into the sea. This rite was first performed to symbolize the notable victory of A.D. 1000, by which the great doge, Pietro Orseolo II., crushed the power of the Dalmatians who had previously harassed Venetian trade in the Adriatic.

8 Shylock's bridge : the Rialto, which was built over like the old London Bridge.

18 clavichord : the earliest of the keyed stringed instruments, and forerunner of the spinet and the modern pianoforte. The clavichord dated from the early sixteenth century and was noted for its delicate tone.

19 lesser thirds: minor thirds, hence "plaintive." A third is the interval between two notes which are alphabetically three letters apart, *i.e.* which occupy degrees of the stave next but one to each other, as A and C or F and A. The combination of C and E_b gives a minor third.

19 sixths diminished: a sixth is the interval between two notes alphabetically six letters apart, as A and F or E and C. A diminished sixth (very rarely used) contains one semi-tone less than the minor sixth, e.g. the combination of E \sharp and C.

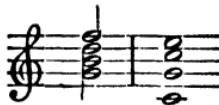


Such an interval might, in some contexts, give a mournful effect; hence "sigh on sigh."

20 Those suspensions, those solutions: a suspension is the holding on of one or more notes in a chord, while the remaining notes move on to another chord. Dissonance is thus produced, but is relieved when the note or notes pass to their proper place in the new chord, thus giving harmony. This process is called resolution. Thus we might have



instead of the simple progression (dominant seventh to tonic).



21 Those commiserating sevenths : sevenths produce discord, and Browning probably refers here to the minor seventh. He terms them "commiserating," because they are less mournful than the lesser thirds or the diminished sixths. Examples of sevenths :



Major Minor

24-25 the dominant's persistence . . . an octave struck the answer: the dominant is the fifth note of the scale. The dominant chord is commonly resolved by a following tonic chord, *i.e.* a chord written on the first degree of the scale. Hence Browning represents the dominant as persisting until answered by the octave. Browning may also be thinking of the fugue form, in which the repetition of the theme in the dominant is answered in the tonic an octave higher than the first presentation of the theme, and so the work comes to a close like the *Toccata* here described.

35 Dust and ashes : these lines (to l. 43) are supposed to be spoken by Galuppi. "Yours," in l. 37, stands for the soul of the poet himself.

44 the gold: Venetian women were noted for their gold or auburn hair.

DE GUSTIBUS (1855)

This poem may be compared with the earlier *Home-Thoughts from Abroad*. It is another declaration of the poet's love of England, but side by side with his devotion to his own country, stands his love for the land in which so many happy years of his life were spent—Italy. His sympathy with the Italian struggle for liberty is hinted at in ll. 35-38.

— De Gustibus: the complete proverb runs: *De gustibus non disputandum (est)*; "Tastes are not a matter for argument."

22 cicala : or cicada or cigala ; an insect resembling a locust. The continuous and shrill song of the males is a characteristic of the Mediterranean region in summer.

32 scorpion : an insect with large pincers and a flexible tail armed with poison glands and a sharp sting.

35 the king : Ferdinand II., King of the Two Sicilies (i.e. Naples and Sicily), 1830-59. He was a noted tyrant and was nicknamed "King Bomba." He was the son of Ferdinand I., and grandson of Don Carlos of Bourbon (later Charles III. of Spain); hence his "Bourbon arm" (l. 37). The Bourbon family was driven from Naples in 1860.

40 Queen Mary's saying : Queen Mary was so grieved by the loss of Calais to the French in 1557, that she declared on her death-bed that the name "Calais" would be found written on her heart.

43 Open my heart . . . : these lines, 43-44, are inscribed on a tablet on the Palazzo Rezzonico, Venice, where Browning died on December 12th, 1889.

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD (1845)

10 the white-throat : a small bird of the warbler family, so named from the white marking on its throat.

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA (1845)

This poem, companion to the former, was inspired by the patriotic feeling aroused in Browning by the sight of Gibraltar as he first sailed to Venice in 1838. It indicates another aspect of the poet's love of England: his mind turns here to the greatness of his country, and her victories on the sea; and these ideas suggest the thought of his own duty towards her.

1 Cape Saint Vincent : the cape on the S.W. extremity of Portugal, made famous by the victory of the English fleet under Admiral Jervis, over a much larger Spanish fleet, on February 14th, 1797.

2 Cadiz : the important port on the S. coast of Spain. The second Spanish Armada against England was prepared at Cadiz, but the English fleet, under Essex and Raleigh, entered the harbour and destroyed the ships and stores gathered there.

3 Trafalgar : the Cape of Trafalgar is E. of Cadiz. Nelson's great victory over the French and Spanish fleets was won here on October 21st, 1805.

7 Jove's planet : Jupiter.

SAUL

(*Stanzas i.-ix., 1845; the complete poem, 1855*)

The story of the poem is taken from a few verses in *1 Samuel*, xvi. 14-23.

But the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.

And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee.

Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before

thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.

And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. . . .

And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armour-bearer. . . .

And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

Dr Berdoe suggests that some hints for David's series of tunes may also have been taken from Longus's romance of *Daphnis and Chloe*: he refers to Smith's translation (Bohn edn.), pp. 303-04, 332-34.

The most moving part of the poem, however, is the passage of prophecy (Stanzas xvi.-xviii.). Except for suggestions from the Messianic psalms (Ps. ii., xxi., xxii., xlv., lxxii., cx.), this passage is entirely of Browning's own conception, and the last stanza is strongly marked by his individual note and power.

The verse of the poem, with its sweeping, sonorous rhythm, is admirably adapted to the exaltation and passionate feeling of the singer.

1 Abner: the captain of Saul's host (Cf. 1 Sam., xxvi. 5). He is here addressing David, the speaker in the poem.

3 the King: Saul, the first king of the Israelites. See 1. 179 and 1 Sam., ix.

9 the Spirit: the evil spirit sent by the Lord. Cf. above, 1 Sam., xvi. 14.

12 those lilies: the lilies referred to in the Bible are usually species of gladiolus. These are indigenous to Palestine and grow among the grain: their colours vary from pink to purple, violet and blue.

31 waiting his change: a reference to the snake's casting of its slough.

45 jerboa: (Arab.); a small jumping rodent animal, sometimes called the jumping hare.

60 the Levites: the priests. Cf. *Numbers*, viii. 5-26.

65 male-sapphires: "male" meaning "superior."

101 the cherubim-chariot: no doubt suggested by the vision of the cherubims in *Ezek.*, x. 8-22.

187-88 The river's aware with smooth paper-reeds: the papyrus from which paper will be made to record Saul's glory, is now, as it grows in the river, blown over by the winds of prophecy.

203 Hebron: the most southerly of the three cities of refuge west of Jerusalem.

204 Kidron: a brook near Jerusalem.

244 an abyss: seeking to explain the dew-drop he encounters

an inexplicable abyss : his poor knowledge " shrivels at Wisdom laid bare."

253 man's nothing-perfect : the thought is typical of Browning : cf. *Abt Vogler*, l. 54; *A Grammarian's Funeral*, l. 103; and Introduction, pp. xxxi.-ii.

319 And the stars of night . . . : a line distinctly reminiscent of Shelley, and perhaps an echo of *Prometheus Unbound*, IV. 45.

MY STAR (1855)

One of several of Browning's lyrics presenting in symbolic form the significance for the individual of an object or event. (Cf. *Memorabilia*, *Summum Bonum*, *A Pearl, a Girl*.)

4 angled spar : Browning compares the light of the star to the rainbow-colours produced by a prism or brilliant.

11 Saturn : Browning no doubt chose Saturn here because of the astrological significance of this planet. " On account of its remoteness and slowness of motion, Saturn was supposed to cause coldness, sluggishness, and gloominess of temperament in those born under its influence, and in general to have a baleful effect on human affairs."—O.E.D.

BY THE FIRE-SIDE (1855)

Most of Browning's love-poems are poems of unhappy love, and purely objective. In this poem, however, love is successful : and here too Browning undoubtedly reveals something of his own love-story, though his courtship of Elizabeth Barrett in Wimpole Street, is transferred to scenery suggested by a mountain gorge where Browning often walked or rode during summers spent at the Baths of Lucca (1849, 1853). Reminiscences of the Alps are also blended with the picture, as is evident from the mention of the *Alpine Gorge* (l. 32), and *Pella* (l. 43).

It is interesting to note that in this, as in most of his love-poems, the underlying thought is that of the critical or psychological moment: the idea that there are moments in our lives when we must seize our chance or let it slip for ever—our life being made or marred accordingly. (Cf. *The Statue and the Bust*, *Youth and Art*, and the Introduction, p. xxxiii.)

12 deep in Greek : Browning was always a keen student of Greek literature, and the prophecy of this poem may be said to have been fulfilled by his later work in *Balaustion's Adventure*, *Aristophanes' Apology*, and the translation of the *Agamemnon* of *Æschylus*.

43 Pella : a small town in Piedmont, North Italy, situated on the western shore of Lake Orta.

64 freaked : used in the Miltonic sense of " fantastically streaked." (Cf. *Lycidas*, l. 44.)

73 Cut hemp-stalks : hemp having been cut would be bundled

and put in a dyke so that the soft part of the stalks rotted from the fibre.

74 fret : eat into (O.E. *fretan*, to devour).

95 Five, six, nine : 1569.

105 The path grey heads abhor : the path represents old age leading to death, and the crag's sheer edge is death itself. Youth with its flowers of life and joy comes to an end, but life bears us along to the gulf of death, a gulf which is separated by but an inch from the safe path of life.

113-14 that great brow and the spirit-small hand propping it : here, as in Stanza lii., we have a vignette of Mrs Browning.

155 You count the streaks and rings : on the breasts of the hawks seen flying above.

185 chrysolite : "gold-stone," a precious stone of yellow or green colour.

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA (1855)

This poem may be regarded as a contrast to *By the Fire-side*. Here the revelation or discovery of love is not complete ; the "good minute" passes continually and all that remains is,

Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

The human drama of the poem is contrasted with the scene in which the action is set—the Roman Campagna with its open spaces "bare to heaven above."

— The Campagna : the Campagna di Roma is the plain lying around Rome, and corresponds to the ancient Latium : its whole extent is dotted with ruins, and though in summer it is arid and plagued with malaria, it is covered in spring with a wealth of flowers (Ital. *campagna*, from Lat. *campania*, formed from *campus*, a field).

15 weft : the woof of cloth, the threads that cross the warp.

21 champaign : flat, open country (from the Fr. *champagne*, from the same root as *campagna*.)

LOVE IN A LIFE, LIFE IN A LOVE (1855)

Two more companion poems, of which the first is a typical piece of Browning's symbolism, and the second especially noteworthy for the expression of aspiration and undaunted courage contained in its middle portion. These lines sum up Browning's attitude to life, and give the foundation of his "optimism."

MEMORABILIA (1855)

Another study, in symbolic guise, of the psychological value, for particular persons in particular times and places, of events

apparently insignificant. The prosaic person addressed in the poem laughs at the poet, who is thrilled by this mention of a meeting with Shelley. So for a stranger the hand-breadth of moor and the finding of the eagle-feather would have no significance: then why tell the whole story?—"So I forget the rest."

1 Shelley: Shelley was Browning's first master in serious poetry. (Cf. *Pauline*, §§ 8-9, 22, and Introduction, p. xii.)

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA (1855)

This is one of the most vivid of Browning's dramatic studies, and is interesting alike for the way in which it shows Browning's love of music (cf. *A Toccata of Galuppi's, Abt Vogler*), for the philosophy of life which is symbolized by the analysis of the fugue, for the sympathetic humour of its character-study, and for the mastery of grotesque rime which is revealed in it.

— Master Hugues: the name of the composer is imaginary.

— Saxe-Gotha: or Gotha, in Thuringia, Central Germany: formerly the capital of the Duchy of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.

4 mountainous fugues: the fugue is one of the most elaborate and complex musical forms, and consists, in its most highly developed stage, of eight parts: (1) the Subject, (2) the Answer, (3) the Counter-subject (these themes are all announced in the beginning or exposition of the work), (4) the Stretto, (5) the Codetta, (6) the Episode, (7) the Pedal, (8) the Coda. The fugue was developed especially in Italy in the seventeenth century, and perfected in Germany in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The finest examples are those of Bach and of Handel.

In *Master Hugues* five different parts are represented as working out the argument of the fugue. See ll. 56-100.

26 Aloys, Jurien, Just: the saints imagined as going their rounds in Stanza v.

35 helve: a helve is the handle of an axe. Does Browning here use the word in the sense of "a hand" or "a heave"?

39 three claviers: three keyboards of the organ, the three *manual* claviers being here referred to.

44 two great breves: a breve is the longest note in music and was originally written and printed square in shape.

49 sciolists: dilettanti, people who have only a superficial knowledge of a subject.

49 shent: put to shame (O.E. *scendan*).

80 O Danaides, O Sieve: the Danaides were the fifty daughters of Danaus, king of Argos. They were married to the fifty sons of Ægyptus, but to revenge an old wrong done by Ægyptus to their father Argos, forty-nine of the Danaides murdered their husbands on the wedding night. For this crime they were condemned for ever in the underworld to pour water into a sieve.

This exclamation therefore expresses the idea: "What a futile task!" "What a useless dispute of the parts of the fugue!"

83 the casuist Escobar: a casuist is one who is willing to adapt his religion or philosophy to meet the exigencies of particular cases.

Escobar y Mendoza (1589-1669) was a famous Spanish Jesuit, who, though himself a noble man, tried to excuse human weakness by teaching that evil actions matter nothing if the intentions are good. Pascal, in his *Lettres Provinciales*, bitterly attacked this theory.

86 Est fuga, volvitur rota: "it is a flight, the wheel turns round." The image is suggested by the etymological sense of the term "fugue."

92 risposting: a term used in fencing to indicate a quick return. Here it implies "a quick repartee."

100 tickens: or "ticking," a closely-woven twill fabric.

105 Tiring three boys: the blowing of large organs was formerly a strenuous occupation. An over-powerful organ built in Winchester Cathedral in the tenth century took seventy men to blow it.

129 for pipe and for tabor: a tabor was a small drum used as an accompaniment for the pipe or fife. "Pipe and tabor" are here used as typifying the organ.

136 meā poenā: at the risk of punishment to myself.

137 Counterpoint: the art of combining melodies.

137 like a Gorgon: the monster with hair and girdle of snakes, whose gaze turned to stone anyone who looked at her. The Gorgon was slain by Perseus.

140 mode Palestrina: Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1524-94), born at Palestrina near Rome, and Director of sacred music at the Vatican; one of the greatest of the polyphonic school of composers and one of the revivers of music in modern Europe.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP (1842)

I we French stormed Ratisbon: Ratisbon (Germ. *Regensburg*), the Bavarian city on the Danube, was besieged by Napoléon in his campaign against the Austrians in 1809. The incident here recounted is true.

11 Lannes: Jean Lannes, Duc de Montebello (1769-1809), one of Napoléon's most skilful and trusted marshals. He was killed later in this same campaign.

29 flag-bird: the eagle of Napoléon's flag.

29 vans: wings (Lat. *vannus*.)

MY LAST DUCHESS (1842)

Two characters and a fragment of life are here dramatically presented with great artistic economy in a monologue of less than sixty lines. This is an admirable example of the dramatic monologue as employed by Browning. The Duke unconsciously reveals his jealousy, pride, egotism and underhand cruelty, and shows his total inability to understand the natural gaiety of the girl he had married. He exhibits her portrait, not in the spirit of devotion to his dead wife, but because he is the possessor of a masterpiece.

— Ferrara : a famous city of Lombardy, situated on the Adriatic, the seat of the Este family from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century. Its dukes were renowned patrons of the New Learning, and Ariosto lived at the court of Ferrara for some years.

3 Frà Pandolf : an imaginary artist.

49 the Count your master : the first hint we have of the identity of the Duke's interlocutor. He is evidently the envoy of a foreign Count whose daughter the Duke is intending to marry, and with whom the Duke is bargaining for an ample dowry.

56 Claus of Innsbruck : the sculptor is again imaginary.

THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY (1845)

A poem suggested by Browning's second journey in Italy in 1844 : he landed at Naples and travelled over the plain of Sorrento. The imaginary Englishman who speaks is amusing a little Italian girl, while the Scirocco storm breaks over them. The storm reminds the poet of the political storm, agitating England at this time (1845), over the Repeal of the Corn Laws, and he refers to this at the conclusion of the poem.

This piece is a fine example of Browning's minute observation of Nature and of his power of detailed and colourful description.

— Piano di Sorrento : the plain of Sorrento lies along the coast S. of Naples. Sorrento was a notable Neapolitan summer resort in the Augustan age, and the coast-scenery and the flowers, groves and perfumes of the surrounding country make this still one of the loveliest parts of Italy.

1 Fortù : an Italian girl's name.

3 Scirocco : the hot, oppressive wind which blows periodically with whirlwind force from N. Africa, bringing heavy rains with it.

8 quail : as the following lines indicate, these little field birds are eaten by the Italians. They are broiled whole and eaten with the fingers, and are esteemed a great delicacy.

12 chapping : cracking, or opening in long slits. (The word is tending to become specialized in meaning.)

24 frails : a basket of rushes for containing figs or raisins.

27 Amalfi : on the N. of the Gulf of Salerno.

35 Salerno : in the centre of the Gulf of Salerno, which is S. of Naples.

49 lasagne : a species of macaroni.

54 cheese-ball : = "chesboll" = "chibol," the name originally given to a kind of leek; but Browning seems clearly to refer to the bulb of the Sweet Fennel which is eaten extensively (usually cooked or in salad) in Italy.

69 sorbs : the service-tree (*Pyrus domestica*).

79 fume-weed : fumitory (O. Fr. *Fumeterre*, *Fume de terre*, earth-smoke), or else for fume-worts, *Fumariaceæ*.

81 lentisks : the lentisk or mastic is a low shrubby tree of the Mediterranean, which produces a valuable aromatic and astringent resin, used as chewing-gum.

86 Calvano : a hill rising from the Plain of Sorrento.

100 Galli : these islands, situated on the N. of the Gulf of Salerno, and W. of Amalfi, have been identified with the islands on which the Sirens dwelt. (Cf. *Odyssey*, Book XII.)

122 abbot's own cheek : Cf. *Holy-Cross Day*, l. 20.

126 the Rosary's Virgin : the Feast of the Virgin of the Rosary falls on the first Sunday in October. The Feast was instituted as that of St Mary of Victory by Pope Pius V. in commemoration of the victory of the fleets of the Christian nations, commanded by Don John of Austria, over the Turks in the battle of Lepanto, 1571. The battle was being fought and won while the members of the Confraternity of the Rosary at Rome were praying for victory. In 1583 Pope Gregory XIII. renamed the day as the Feast of the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

133 Bellini : Vincenzo Bellini, an Italian operatic composer (1802-35).

133 Auber : Daniel F. E. Auber, a French composer (1782-1871). His best known works are the operas *Les Diamants de la Couronne*, 1841, and *Manon Lescaut*, 1856.

136 stomp : coined from "stamp" for the purposes of rhyme.

145 abolishing Corn-Laws : the Corn Laws, imposing duties on foreign corn, were in force in England in various forms from the time of Henry VI., and were repealed in 1846 by the government of Sir Robert Peel.

146 If 'twere proper . . . : the line is contemptuous : " You might as well ask whether it were proper that Scirocco should vanish ! " Browning was always liberal in sympathy.

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER (1855)

A poem of unsuccessful love which is very characteristic of Browning. Defeat is accepted courageously; there is no sentimental whining, but the simple desire to distil the best out of what life offers.

72-87 These lines, which are epitomized in the well-known couplet of ll. 80-81, express the truth which is more fully ex-

pounded in *Cleon* that life is greater than art and the soul's experience than this world's favour.

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL (1855)

Both the theme and the form of this poem are characteristic of Browning. His interest in the period of the Renaissance is here revealed, and we have a further illustration of the stress he lays on aspiration and single-minded effort. He declares again his faith in Man's inheritance of Eternity; and the Grammarians is praised because, however trivial his accomplishment appeared, he followed his ideal whole-heartedly and energetically, trusting always in the completing of life after death. This position is well summed up in ll. 113-20.

The metre of the poem, with its almost jerky alternation of long and short lines, is admirably suggestive of the toiling ascent of the disciples bearing the body of their dead master up the mountain-side. The number of grotesque double rhymes employed is curious; these violences of rime have far less right here than in *The Pied Piper*, but it must be admitted that they help to suggest that contempt of everyday and mundane things which marked the dead scholar. (Cf. ll. 70-72, 98-100, 110-12.)

This work is further linked with *The Pied Piper* in its source. It seems probable that, like the earlier poem, it was partly suggested by a chapter of *The Wonders of the Little World* of Nathaniel Wanley. Chapter xli. of Book III. is entitled: "Of the exceeding intentness of some men upon their Meditations and Studies." This chapter gives the stories of fifteen "martyrs" to the cause of learning, and the accounts of Dr Reynolds, a seventeenth-century Oxford scholar, and of Jacobus Mullichus, a German physician of the sixteenth century, closely resemble that which Browning gives of the hero of his poem. Thus Dr Reynolds, when his friends begged that he would not "lose his life for learning," "perdere sustantiam propter accidentia," with a smile, "answered out of the poet":

Nec propter vitam vivendi perdere causas.
Nor to save life, lose that for which I live.

This resemblance was pointed out by W. T. Young.

3 crofts: small enclosed fields adjoining a homestead.

3 thorpes: villages. This word, of Scandinavian origin, is common in East Anglia.

34 Lyric Apollo: Apollo was the Greek god of Song and of manly beauty. The Grammarians had been in youth possessed of the figure and beauty of Apollo.

37 the little touch: the first sign of the approach of disease.

68 Sooner, he spurned it: he spurned the idea of living before he had gathered all that books had to teach him about life.

86 Calculus: the stone, a disease of the bladder.

88 Tussis : a bronchial cough.

95 soul-hydroptic : soul-thirsty. Dropsical persons suffer much from thirst.

103 God's task . . . : Browning uses the same image here as in *Abt Vogler*, l. 72. "On the earth the broken arcs ; in the heaven a perfect round."

129-31 Hoti, Oun, De : Greek particles : *ότι*, because, that ; *οὖτις*, therefore ; *-δε*, a suffix.

134 purlieus : lit. "borders," "outlying regions" ; here perhaps in sense of "haunts."

HOLY-CROSS DAY (1855)

With its satiric description, and the clear-sighted, patient endurance expressed in the *Song*, this poem throbs with Browning's love of spiritual liberty. The first part is also typical of his love of the grotesque, and shows the range and power of his virile vocabulary.

— **Holy-Cross Day** : September 14th. The festival commemorates the miraculous appearance to the Emperor Constantine in A.D. 312 of the Cross in the sky. The Jews were not compelled to attend an annual sermon on this day, but it is true that papal bulls enforcing such observances were issued from time to time right down to Browning's own day. Pope Gregory XVI., who "abolished this bad business of the Sermon," was Pope from 1831-46.

— **Diary by the Bishop's Secretary** : this is fictitious, but a clever piece of satire.

10 handsel : the word is used in its derived sense of "to be the first to try, or taste the use of."

22 hour-glass : sermons in the sixteenth century commonly lasted from three to five hours, and an hour-glass was a regular piece of pulpit furniture.

38 From a Jew . . . to a Turk : the idea of the speaker is that the Turks, being Mohammedans, are, as it were, half-way along the road to Christianity.

47 worst of trades : money-lending to pay for the Bishop's pleasures.

52 Corso : the main street in Rome, so called because the Carnival, which "ushers in Christian Lent," took place there. The funds required for the Carnival were frequently extorted from the Jews.

66 Ben Ezra's Song of Death : for Rabbi Ben Ezra, see Browning's poem of that name, and the note, p. 226.

The song here given is of Browning's own conception.

78 So the Prophet saith : see *Isaiah*, lvi. 6-7.

92 naming a dubious name : although Jesus was born of the line of David, He did not appeal to Judaism as fulfilling the national idea of the Messiah. Besides, He was brought up at

Nazareth and known as the Nazarene. "Can any good come out of Nazareth?"

104 we withstand Barabbas: Barabbas was the thief or seditionist whom Pilate released to the Jews at the Feast of the Passover, when he would rather have released Jesus. Barabbas stands here as a symbol of the greed and oppression of the Christian world, which the Jews of the Middle Ages, and later centuries, suffered and resisted.

111 By the Ghetto's plague: the Jews in Italian cities were confined to one quarter, called the "Ghetto" (from Ital. *Borghetto*, a little town).

THE STATUE AND THE BUST (1855)

This poem takes up in very different form the moral enforced in *A Grammarian's Funeral*, that in all action the utmost effort and resolution are required, and that it is not failure which is to be condemned, but half-heartedness and indecision.

Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize. . . .

The metre of the poem is the Italian *terza rima*, the metre of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. This metre has been used by Chaucer, Shelley and other English poets, but Browning is almost alone in observing the break in the sense at the end of each stanza, which was demanded in Dante's use of this form.

The Florentine legend on which the poem is founded is thus summarized by Mrs Orr:

In the piazza of the SS. Annunziata at Florence is an equestrian statue of the Grand Duke Ferdinand the First, representing him as riding away from the church, with his head turned in the direction of the Riccardi Palace, which occupies one corner of the square.

• Tradition asserts that he loved a lady whom her husband's jealousy kept a prisoner there; and that he avenged his love by placing himself in effigy where his glance could always dwell upon her.

1 a palace in Florence: the Palazzo Riccardi-Manelli, situated at one corner of the Piazza della Annunziata ("the square" of l. 2), in which there still stands the equestrian statue of the Grand Duke Ferdinand I. The bust is no longer to be seen, and some say that it never existed.

12 Ferdinand: Ferdinand the First, Grand Duke of Florence, 1587-1609.

18 Riccardi: the Riccardi were one of the noble families of Florence.

21 the coal-black tree: ebony.

22 enclosure: the neck and shoulders of a horse.

34 Via Larga: the Via Larga, now the Via Cavour, is overshadowed by the palace of the Medici.

39 Cosimo and his cursed son : Cosimo dei Medici and his grandson Lorenzo the Magnificent overthrew ("murdered") in reality, if not in name, the first Republic of Florence, by making themselves absolute rulers of the city.

57 catafalk : a hearse or funeral car.

72 ave-bell : the bell rung at dawn and sunset, when the *Ave Maria* is to be said.

94 the Arno bowers : Florence, which is situated on the Arno.

95 Petraja : the royal villa of Petraja, three miles N. of Florence.

113 Envoy . . . from France : perhaps to discuss the marriage of Ferdinand's niece, Marie de' Medici, with the French King, Henri IV.—(Young).

140 simple : foolish.

169 Robbia : Luca della Robbia (1399-1482). He and later members of his family, down to 1566, were famous for their reliefs in enamelled terra cotta.

189 the empty shrine : despite Browning's letter to Mr T. J. Wise, of January 8th, 1887 (quoted in Berdoe), the "empty shrine" is apparently not to be seen.

202 John of Douay : sometimes called Giovanni di Bologna (1524-1608), a sculptor who was born at Douay, but did most of his work in Florence.

219 the chapel yonder : the church of the Santissima Annunziata on the N.E. side of the square.

232 pelf : wealth, especially ill-gotten wealth.

233 an epigram : Browning seems to use the word in the sense of "a piece of folly," but in spite of several clever explanations which have been given, it is difficult to understand how he came to give it this meaning.

234 stamp of the very Guelph : coin of the realm, stamped with the image of the sovereign. Guelph, the name of the English royal house from 1714-1914.

235-50 The true has no value . . . : the idea of these lines is that the conditions of the game do not matter : a hat may serve for a table, counter for coin, a dram for the prize. But if you choose to play the game, it is only just to "do your best," "contend to the uttermost."

249 You of the virtue . . . De te fabula : you who object to this story because the aim in sight was a crime, *De te fabula*! —the story is told of you! You have all the more reason to apply the same moral to acts of virtue.

"CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK
TOWER CAME" (1855)

This poem is based upon the single line from Edgar's song in *King Lear*, III. iv. 93, a line in itself full of romance and sugges-

tion. Several other memories are interwoven into the descriptions, especially in Stanzas xiii., xiv. (see notes to ll. 76, 80), but the work is mainly an elaboration of the picture presented by Shakespeare's line. Browning does not tell a complete story, and it serves little purpose to conjecture as to the motives or results of this incomplete action. Undoubtedly the poem has an allegorical or moral significance, but here again it is questionable whether we are justified in attempting any detailed interpretation, or in seeing more in it than another aspect of Browning's love of the ideal, and of an ideal faithfully pursued. The thought of the poem is thus closely related to that of several others of different kind, e.g. the *Gramarian's Funeral*.

Childe Roland stands out from the whole of Browning's work, and perhaps from the whole of English poetry, as a masterpiece of the description of a natural Universe which is not merely unsympathetic to Man, but doggedly and brutally hostile to his activities. An atmosphere of weird terror, of baleful influences at work, covers the whole scene; Nature has here produced an assemblage of the ugly and the deformed. The lack of rime-variety within the stanza helps to create an impression of dreariness.

— *Childe Roland*: "Childe" is an old word for "knight," commonly used in the Ballads and romances of the Middle Ages.

15 the Dark Tower: this was suggested by a tower Browning once saw in the Carrara mountains.

48 estray: a stray domestic animal.

68 bents: stiff flower-stalks of coarse grasses.

72 Pashing: "crushing" or "dashing": here "beating the water with the feet."

76 one stiff blind horse: a tapestry in Browning's drawing-room had in it the figure of "a red horse with a glaring eye," and this seems to have suggested the figure and colour of the horse here described. (Cf. l. 80.)

80 colloped: a collop is a slice (especially of meat). W. T. Young quotes an interesting parallel from Wanley (cf. notes, pp. 196, 209). Wanley speaks of "collops of flesh" torn away from Ravaillac, the murderer of Henri IV.

114 bespate: flooded (from "spate"); or else, bespattered.

133 cirque: a circle of stones, or a natural amphitheatre at the head of a valley.

141 brake: a form of harrow, or perhaps here an instrument of torture.

143 Tophet's tool: Tophet was originally that part of the valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, in which the refuse of the city was burnt. Thus Tophet became synonymous with Hell.

160 Apollyon: one of the monsters encountered by Pilgrim in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

161 dragon-penned: with feathers as in a dragon's wing. (Cf. *Rev.*, ix. 2.)

184 The tempest's mocking elf : the lightning which lights up the rock on which the ship has struck.

203 slug-horn : Browning follows Chatterton in using this archaic word to mean a kind of horn. In reality the M.E. "slogorne" was a corruption of "slogan," a "war-cry."—(Skeat.)

MEN AND WOMEN AN EPISTLE

CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH,
THE ARAB PHYSICIAN (1855)

This study is a masterpiece of dramatic characterization and of descriptive power. The skilful use of significant detail gives a marvellous air of verisimilitude to the poem, so that both the scene, and the characters of Karshish and his master Abib, stand clearly before us.

In theme the poem is intimately connected with *Saul* and with *Easter Day*. The prophecy of the love of Christ in *Saul* is here fulfilled in the miracle of the raising of Lazarus, and the shrewd Arab physician is almost led to believe in life as immortal and in God as the God of Love.

Karshish, the writer of this letter, is supposed to be travelling in Judæa in about A.D. 69-70 ; and he is giving his former teacher, Abib, an account of his travels, of the diseases prevalent among the Jews, and of the herbs he has discovered. The most curious case he has met with is that of one Lazarus, a man of Bethany, who declares that he died and was restored to life by a Nazarene physician of his tribe. This man Lazarus has, indeed, something strange, fresh and childlike about him ; but doubtless his is but a case of "mania subinduced by epilepsy" ; and at all events the Nazarene is beyond questioning, having "perished in a tumult many years ago." Karshish is half-ashamed to have been so impressed by this Lazarus, and tries time after time, in his letter, to get back to the scientific results of his Syrian journey ; but he cannot shake off his wonderings on the subject of this madman of Bethany and his peculiar secret. Suppose after all that God, the God of Power, should reveal Himself in human form as the God of Love ?

11 the wily vapour : the "puff of vapour . . . man's soul" of 1. 6.

17 true snake-stone : a species of stone supposed to cure snake-bite.

28 Vespasian : governor of the province of Judæa, A.D. 67-69. When he became Emperor in A.D. 69, his son Titus carried on the war against Jerusalem, and sacked the city in A.D. 70.

36 Bethany : two miles E. of Jerusalem.

43 tertians : fevers which produce paroxysms every third day.
 45-46 A spider . . . weaves no web :

The spider referred to belongs to the Wandering group : they stalk their prey in the open field, or in divers lurking places, and are quite different in their habits from the webspinners. The spider sprinkled with mottles . . . is the Zebra spider.—(Berdoe.)

49 run-a-gate : used in the sense of " vagabond " ; but the word is really a corruption of the M.E. *renegat*, a renegade, and not of " runne a gate," run on the road.

55 gum-tragacanth : a gum made from spiny shrubs of the genus " *Astragalus*," growing in Persia and neighbouring countries.

57 porphyry : here used as in M.E. for a slab of stone on which drugs are ground.

60 Zoar : one of the " cities of the Plain," at the S. of the Dead Sea. It no longer exists.

67 tang : really a strong flavour : here used for a strong desire.

82 exhibition : the use or administration of a drug.

103 fume : often used of a vapour rising from the stomach, but here employed in the derived sense of a fantastic notion in the mind.

106 saffron : once supposed to be valuable as a cordial.

107 the after-life : not life after death, but the rest of his life.

109 Sanguine : used in the original, medical sense of full-blooded, healthy. The other three " humours " or conditions of the body were the choleric, the melancholic, and the phlegmatic.

137 The golden mean : avoidance of excess in either direction. The phrase is a translation of the *aurea mediocritas* of Horace (*Odes*, II. x. 5).

174 Thou and the child : neither the child of Lazarus, nor Abib or any other person, can tell how their actions will affect Lazarus in his new spiritual perception of things.

177 a mine of Greek fire : a mass of easily combustible material which could be floated amongst shipping and then ignited. Greek fire was first used by the Greeks of Constantinople. Young notes that this invention is described by Wanley, Book III., Ch. xliii. § 6. (For Wanley, see notes, pp. 209, 213.)

189 this black thread through the blaze : as in ll. 178-81, the black thread is finite human life crossing the blaze or glory of Eternity.

228 affects : loves, has affection for.

257 On vain recourse . . . : there is no evidence that the Jews had recourse to Jesus for protection against the earthquake ; but such is the story as Karshish has heard it.

281 Blue-flowering borage : the nitrous juice of borage was long used as a cordial.

306-11 So, through the thunder . . . : cf. *Saul*, ll. 309-12.

FRA LIPPO LIPPI (1855)

This study gives one of Browning's most vivid pictures of Renaissance Italy, and the gusto with which the portrait of Fra Lippo Lippi is drawn is evident throughout the poem. In this monologue, moreover, we have a greater sense of the life and movement of the crowd than in most of Browning's works. First there is the picture of the group of the Watch, then of the life of the city in Carnival-time, and finally of the monk community inspecting the paintings. The "Coronation of the Virgin" described in the close of the poem continues this idea of crowd-movement.

The poem is interesting as placing side by side two opposed views of art current in the later Middle Ages and early Renaissance, and implied in many more modern controversies. On the one hand we have beauty and art sternly subordinated to spiritual values; on the other hand are presented the claims of art and sensuous beauty to their own validity. Browning is defending the latter position in this poem (*cf. ll. 217-20, 265-69, 282-90, 313-14*), but he realizes that all great art is a harmony of the spiritual and the sensuous (*cf. ll. 205-08*), and the claims of the spiritual are suggested in the next poem, *Andrea del Sarto*, and in *Old Pictures in Florence*.

Needless to say, this conflict is not confined to art, but has its wider application to life as a whole. The antinomy of matter and spirit, body and soul, is one of the oldest problems of religion and philosophy. Browning touches on the same theme again in *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, Stanzas xi.-xii.

— Fra Lippo Lippi: (1406-69), was the son of a Florentine butcher. His parents died when he was very young, and he was entrusted to the care of his aunt, Monna Lapaccia, who placed him at the age of eight in the Carmelite monastery in Florence. He there became a painter, and in 1432 was taken into the patronage of the Medici, being released, it seems, from his religious vows. He received some ecclesiastical preferments later, but, owing to his love affairs and fondness for conviviality, was never very rich nor very reliable in his painting-contracts. His life is told by Vasari in his *Lives of the Painters*, the source from which Browning drew the facts of his poem.

3 Zooks: a contraction of "gadzooks," an oath or exclamation of surprise.

7 The Carmine: the monastery of the Carmelites. See note to l. 139.

17 Cosimo of the Medici: an able ruler and merchant of Florence (1389-1464), and the patron of Fra Lippo Lippi and of other artists and scholars. He returned from exile in 1434, and made himself master of Florence, being succeeded in his rule by members of his family down to the eighteenth century. (*Cf. note to The Statue and the Bust, l. 39.*)

21 you, sir . . . : the captain of the watch who has caught Fra Lippo.

29 the munificent House : the House of the Medici.

53 Flower o' the broom : in this and the following fragments, Browning is imitating the Italian "stornelli," folk-songs based on flower-motives, and consisting of three riming lines, in the first of which the flower is described, while in the last two the love-theme is developed.

67 St Laurence : one of the oldest churches in Florence, and the burial-place of Cosimo de' Medici.

73 Jerome . . . with his stone : St Jerome (c. A.D. 340-420) was one of the most famous of the early fathers of the Church. His last years were spent in very strict asceticism, and he is often represented as beating himself with a stone.

84 shucks : husks.

121 the Eight : in 1375, during the war between Florence and the Pope, a new bench of magistrates was created, called the Signoria or Eight of War.

130 the antiphony : the service-book of the Roman Catholic Church.

139 Carmelites : the Carmelites or White Friars are one of the four orders of mendicant friars. They took their name from Mt. Carmel, because Elijah was their traditional founder.

139 Camaldoiese : the order of monks founded by St Romuald towards the end of the tenth century, at Camaldoli in the Apennines. In this connection see I. 236 and note.

140 Preaching Friars : the Dominican Order, founded by St Dominic in 1215. See also I. 235 and note.

172 funked : stifled in smoke.

189 Giotto : Angiolotto di Bondone (c. 1276-1336), one of the greatest of the early Florentine painters. He is supposed to have been a shepherd-boy whom Cimabue discovered drawing whilst minding his sheep.

196 Herodias : Herodias is represented in one of Fra Lippo's John the Baptist frescoes at Prato. According to the Gospel story, it was Herodias, the sister-in-law of Herod, who asked for the execution of John. (Cf. *Matt.*, xiv. 3-12.)

228 it's fast holding . . . : the rings are useful as a means of re-entering the house.

235 Brother Angelico : Giovanni da Fiesole (1387-1455), a Dominican, and the most religious of the early Italian painters. Much of his work is technically incorrect, but he was a master of pure colour, and his work is inspired by great religious fervour. Some of his best frescoes are in the Convent of San Marco, Florence.

236 Brother Lorenzo : called "Il Monaco," the monk (1370-1425). He belonged to the Camaldoiese order in Florence, and became famous as a painter throughout Italy.

276 Guidi : Tommaso Guidi or Masaccio (1401-29), called

"Hulking Tom," was not the pupil, but the master, of Fra Lippo Lippi. His frescoes are still to be seen in the Carmine at Florence.

304 Art was given for that : this conception of art is to be noted : Art is to be natural or sensuous as well as spiritual, and is not a branch of morals ; but it has a social function.

324 Prato : a small town twelve miles N. of Florence. Fra Lippo's frescoes on the subjects of John the Baptist, St Bernard, and St Stephen are to be seen here, but there are none of St Laurence.

328 the Deacon : St Laurence was burned to death on a gridiron, and, according to the legend, asked to be "turned" as he was "done on one side."

339 Chianti : a red wine of Tuscany.

346-77 Sant' Ambrogio's : Lippi painted an alter-piece for the nuns of St Ambrogio's in 1441. It represents the Coronation of the Virgin, and one of the figures in the right-hand of the surrounding group is the painter himself (*cf.* l. 363), to whom an angel tends a scroll on which is written, *Iste perfectus opus*, "He was the author of the work." This altar-piece is now in the Accademia at Florence.

351 orris-root : the rhizome of three species of Iris. It has an odour like violets, and is used in perfumes and medicine.

354 Saint John : Saint John Baptist, patron-saint of the church in which the children of Florence are baptized.

355 Saint Ambrose : Archbishop of Milan, 340-97.

387 Saint Lucy. He would excuse his devotion to the beauty of the prior's niece by giving her the name of a saint.

ANDREA DEL SARTO (1855)

This poem presents us with another study of the mind of an artist, but is a great contrast in tone to *Fra Lippo Lippi*. *Andrea del Sarto* is perhaps Browning's finest piece of presentation of dramatic atmosphere. The scene is not described, but is evoked by a number of subtle touches and by the "atmosphere" of the piece, in which the scene, the characters and their problems are all subdued to the silver-grey, placid perfection of the faultless painter's own art.

The human drama is still, however, the main interest, and we are shown not only the speaker, Andrea, but also his wife Lucrezia, to whom he is speaking. She is a cold, beautiful woman, who values her husband's art only for the money that it brings ; and, even as he speaks, she is aching to answer her lover's whistle heard without. But Andrea still stoops before her whims and unfaithfulness of heart.

— Andrea del Sarto : (1486-1531), a Florentine painter, who, for his skill in technical execution, was called "the faultless painter." After studying under a goldsmith and under a wood-

carver, he was apprenticed to the painter Piero di Cosimo. He early fell in love with Lucrezia del Fede, the wife of a Florentine cap-maker, and married her on the death of her husband in 1512. His love for her became sheer infatuation; her face appears in many of his pictures, and to make money for her pleasures became the whole aim of his art. His fame, however, spread to France, and Francis I. invited him to assist in the decoration of the palace of Fontainebleau. He was handsomely treated by Francis, but in response to his wife's appeals, soon returned to Florence. He was entrusted with money for the purchase of pictures for the French King, but this money he spent in building a house for his wife and in other extravagance (*cf. ll. 145 et sq., 212 et sq.*). His last years were spent in disgrace, but he continued to receive commissions to paint. Finally, his wife deserted him, and he died in the plague following the siege of Florence in 1531.

Such is the account which Vasari gives in his *Lives*, and which Browning follows. That moral and artistic listlessness which characterizes Andrea is also hinted at by Vasari:

There was a certain timidity of mind, a sort of diffidence and want of force in his nature, which rendered it impossible that those evidences of ardour and animation which are proper to the more exalted character should ever appear in him.

His is the tragedy of a man satisfied with the technically or humanly perfect, but unable to reach, and making no effort to reach, the divinely imperfect. Yet he realizes that the failures of others are often nobler than his own success. Lines 97-99 sum up the message of the poem, and may be compared with the teaching of *A Grammarians Funeral* and *Rabbi Ben Ezra*.

The poem had an almost accidental origin. John Kenyon, a cousin of Mrs Browning, wrote to Browning in Florence, asking for a copy of the portrait of Andrea del Sarto in the Pitti Gallery. Browning could not procure a copy, so sent the poem—a portrait in words—instead.

5 your friend's friend : Andrea is to paint a picture for the friend of his wife's lover, and the price he receives for his work will be paid to his wife, Lucrezia (l. 8), who will give it to her lover to pay his gambling debts (l. 222).

15 Fiesole : a suburb of Florence, situated on a hill-top overlooking the Arno and about three miles N.W. of the town.

78 less is more : their failure is more noble than Andrea's success because their aim is higher. (*Cf. A Grammarians Funeral*, ll. 113-20.)

88 The sudden blood : he thinks perhaps of Michael Angelo, who was of a hasty temper. (*Cf. Vasari.*)

93 Morello : Monte Morello, a hill about seven miles N. of Florence.

105 The Urbinate : Rafael Santi (Raphael), 1483-1520, the famous painter, was born at Urbino.

106 George Vasari : (1512-74), a pupil of Michael Angelo and of Andrea del Sarto, and the author of the *Lives of the Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, 1550.

119 Rafael : see note to l. 105.

130 Agnolo : Michael Angelo or Michelagnuolo (1475-1564), one of the greatest and most versatile of the Florentine artists of the Renaissance. He was sculptor, painter, poet, architect, and military engineer.

146 For fear of chancing . . . : French nobles would be constantly visiting Florence, and Andrea was ashamed of being recognized by them because of his embezzlement of the money entrusted to him by Francis I. (Cf. ll. 247-49, and the note on Andrea above).

149 Francis : Francis I. of France (1494-1547).

150 Fontainebleau : the town and royal palace some forty miles S.W. of Paris. Andrea del Sarto and also Leonardo da Vinci and Benvenuto Cellini were employed in its decoration.

178 The Roman's : Rafael's. Most of his work was done at Rome.

184 Said one day Agnolo : Rafael and M. Angelo were for years at enmity, and M. Angelo might have made some such remark to Rafael. "A palace-wall" probably refers to the Vatican ; Rafael was employed to decorate certain apartments for Pope Julius II.

199-200 What he ? . . . : the parenthesis shows how little attention Lucrezia has paid to Andrea's passionate self-analysis.

207 I mean that I should earn more . . . : Andrea translates his own artistic ideal into the terms of Lucrezia's mercenary ambitions.

210 cue-owls : the Italian *Chiu*, common around the Mediterranean, and so-called from its cry.

220 That Cousin : an anglicizing of the Ital. *cugino*, cousin, meaning here, a lover.—(Young.)

241 scudi : a scudo or crown was worth about five shillings.

261 Four great walls : see *Rev.*, xxi. 15.

263 Leonard : Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), the famous Florentine painter, sculptor, architect and mathematician.

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT SAINT PRAXED'S CHURCH

(*Hood's Magazine*, 1845; *Dramatic Romances*, 1845)

Just as *My Last Duchess* shows how, in the later Italian Renaissance, artistic sensibility often went hand in hand with pride and cruelty, so this poem displays the love of beautiful things become entirely subservient to avarice, sensuality and

childish jealousy. The hatred and jealousy which the Bishop feels for his dead rival is a transposition into another key of the more active feelings of the monk of the *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister*. The Bishop's character is a striking picture of corruption, a corruption into which his finer intellectual nature, with its love of art and its classical scholarship, is drawn.

As a picture of a period the work is no less significant; Ruskin said of it in *Modern Painters* (V. xx. 32-34):

Robert Browning is unerring in every sentence he writes of the Middle Ages; always vital, right, and profound; so that in the matter of art, with which we have been specially concerned, there is hardly a principle connected with the mediæval temper, that he has not struck upon in those seemingly careless and too rugged rhymes of his—(ll. 10-79). . . . I know no other piece of modern English, prose or poetry, in which there is so much told, as in these lines, of the Renaissance spirit,—its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury, and of good Latin. It is nearly all that I said of the central Renaissance in thirty pages of *The Stones of Venice*, put into as many lines, Browning's being also the antecedent work.

— St Praxed's Church: the Church of St Praxed, or Santa Prassede, in Rome, is dedicated to the daughter of Pudens, one of St Paul's first converts in Rome. St Prassede lived in the reign of the Emperor Antonius Pius, and the church existed as early as A.D. 500. There is, however, no Bishop Gandolf buried there, and the story of the poem is imaginary.

2 Anselm: son of the Bishop. (Cf. l. 64.)

5 Old Gandolf: the Bishop's dead rival.

25 basalt: a greenish-black marble of igneous origin.

29 Peach-blossom marble: a precious marble of yellow colour tinted with rose.

31 onion-stone: a translation of the Ital. *Cipollino* (from *Cipolla*, onion); a green and white marble which tends to split into layers like an onion.

41 olive-frail: a rush-basket for olives.

42 lapis lazuli: a rich blue stone much used for interior decorative effect in churches.

46 Frascati villa: Frascati is a village about twelve miles from Rome on the Alban hills; a favourite resort even in classical times.

58 tripod: the seat on which the priestess of Apollo at Delphi sat to deliver the oracles of the god.

58 thyrsus: the ivy-twined staff carried by the devotees of Dionysus or Bacchus.

66 travertine: a white limestone deposited from water holding lime in solution.

71 pistachio-nut: the nut of a small Mediterranean tree, which has a kernel of a pale green colour.

74 brown Greek manuscripts: Greek MSS. were very eagerly

sought for in Italy in the Renaissance, but these sons of the middle and later Renaissance mingle other and more sensual pleasures with their enthusiasm for the New Learning.

77 Tully : Marcus Tullius Cicero, the model of excellence in Latin prose.

79 Ulpian : (A.D. 170-228), a noted Roman jurist. He belongs to the "Silver Age" of Latin prose, and is, therefore, despised by the Bishop.

82 God made and eaten : the Sacrament.

89 mortcloth : funeral pall.

95 Saint Praxed at his sermon . . . : in his delirium he confuses the sex of the Saint, and thinks of her (or him) as preaching the Sermon on the Mount.

99 elucescebat : from Lat. *elucescere*, to shine, to be famous ; this is a late Latin verb, and therefore sneered at by the Bishop. The Ciceronian form would be *elucebat* from *elucere*.

108 vizor : the word is here used not in the sense of the face-piece of a helmet, but to signify a mask.

108 Term : an image of the Roman god Terminus. He was the god of boundaries, and was represented by a square pillar surmounted by a bust.

ONE WORD MORE : TO E. B. B. (1855)

This poem formed the Epilogue to the two volumes of *Men and Women*. Like *By the Fire-side* it tells us something of Browning's devotion to his wife and of her inspiration of his genius. It may be regarded as a response to Mrs Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, written just before the marriage of the two poets in 1846. This tribute to E. B. B. is placed in a fitting position at the close of *Men and Women*, for the poems composing that collection show a deeper understanding of the human heart than any of Browning's earlier work, and this increased insight must be attributed in large measure to those happy years of wedded life in Pisa and Florence.

One Word More is not, however, a direct statement of feeling. Even here Browning, in typical fashion, speaks in imagery ; and the poem forms an elaborate pattern of lyrical symbolism. The essence of what the poet has to say to his wife is put in a single line (l. 140), "Pray you, look on these my men and women," and the starting-point of his argument is that the fifty poems themselves are the only tribute that he can offer ; the work of his brain must speak also for his heart (St. i.). The poet turns wistfully to envy other artists who have been able to express their personal feelings in forms of art different from those that they normally practised. He remembers that Dante, whom the world knew as a poet, took up the painter's art to honour Beatrice; while Raphael, the painter, expressed his love in verse. These

were able, on one occasion at least, to "be the man and leave the artist," to "gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow" (Sts. ii.-viii.). Moses, on the other hand—and here Browning turns from the artist to the legislator—having once revealed his weakness to the people he led, never dared "put off the prophet" and enjoy the experiences of common men (Sts. ix.-xi.).

Browning has no art but poetry in which to express this tribute to his wife; yet within his single medium he can make a distinction between this poem and his other writings. These last are almost all of them cast in dramatic form; *One Word More*, on the contrary, is an utterance of the poet himself, and is addressed to one mind rather than to all the world (Sts. xii.-xiv.).

Nor is this Browning's only consolation. The last part of the poem, with its image of the moon (Sts. xv.-xviii.), develops a further thought. Every mortal has, like the moon, two sides to his soul, "one to face the world with, One to show a woman when he loves her" (ll. 185-6). So the poet who, in *House*, refused to "sonnet-sing" about himself, knows that he is understood by his loved one, whatever the world may think of him as a dramatic poet. More wonderful still, what is true of himself is true also of his "moon of poets," who reveals to him those "novel silent silver lights and darks" undreamed of by the world at large (St. xviii.).

1 my fifty men and women : the two volumes of *Men and Women*, published in 1855, contained fifty studies. In the later editions of his work, Browning redistributed some of these among the earlier groups, so that the section entitled *Men and Women* now contains only twelve poems and this Epilogue.

5 Rafael : only four sonnets of Raphael are now extant. The book which Guido Reni guarded, and which disappeared so mysteriously, contained a century of drawings, not of sonnets.

12 his lady of the sonnets : Vasari tells us in his life of Raphael that the artist fell in love with a young girl, to whom he remained devoted throughout his life. Tradition identified this figure with one of the painter's models called Margherita or La Fornarina, of whom portraits may be seen at the Barberini Palace in Rome and in the Pitti gallery at Florence.

22 Her, San Sisto names : Raphael's Sistine Madonna or Madonna di San Sisto, which is now at Dresden.

22 Her, Foligno : the Madonna di Foligno, now in the Vatican.

23 Her, that visits Florence : the Madonna del Granduca in the Pitti Palace, Florence. The Madonna is here represented as appearing to a votary in a vision.

24 Her . . . with lilies : the Madonna called "La Belle Jardinière" in the Louvre, Paris.

27 Guido Reni : a noted Italian painter (1575-1642), who spent the last twenty years of his life at Bologna.

32 Dante : at the close of the *Vita Nuova* (xxxv), in which Dante tells the story of his love for Beatrice Portinari, he tells how on the anniversary of the death of Beatrice he drew an angel on a tablet in honour of her memory.

36 that hot ink : that austere and righteous hatred of evil and of evil-doers which characterizes the *Divina Commedia* of Dante.

37 his left hand i' the hair of the wicked . . . : a confused reminiscence of Dante's reference to the Florentine traitor, Bocca degli Abati, whom the poet met in Hell (*Inferno*, canto xxxii). Bocca was not a "live man" who could "go festering through Florence" (except metaphorically), and W. M. Rossetti conjectured that Browning had confused Bocca with the traitor Frate Alberigo, who was still living in Dante's time; he was not, however, a Florentine.

46 Says he—"Certain people" . . . :

On that day which fulfilled the year since my lady had been made of the citizens of eternal life, remembering me of her as I sat alone, I betook myself to draw the resemblance of an angel upon certain tablets. And while I did thus, chancing to turn my head, I perceived that some were standing beside me to whom I should have given courteous welcome, and that they were observing what I did: also I learned afterwards that they had been there a while before I perceived them. Perceiving whom, I arose for salutation, and said: "Another was with me."—(*Vita Nuova*, xxxv; trans. Rossetti.)

It will be noticed that there is nothing in this passage to suggest that the visitors mentioned were people portrayed in the *Inferno* or that they deliberately prevented the completion of the poet's drawing. In fact, the passage continues "Afterwards, when they had left me, I set myself again to mine occupation, to wit, to the drawing of angels."

57 Bice : a contraction of Beatrice.

63-64 Using nature : leaving his own art, which has become "second nature" to him, and adopting an art in which he is not skilled, and in which he works perhaps blunderingly, but with nature's own instinctive power of creation.

72 the artist's sorrow : one recalls Shakespeare's expression of a similar thought in his Sonnet xxix. Browning, however, explains the artist's sorrow by the example of a ruler or prophet, Moses (Sts. ix.-xi.).

73 Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement : heaven's gift, the artist's inspiration, is not only limited by the earthly medium in which it is expressed, but is often unappreciated or misunderstood by the public. Such misunderstanding robs the artist of his joy in creation. So too, with the prophet: if a second occasion had arisen for Moses to provide water for the Israelites in the desert, his triumph in the miracle would have been marred by the memory of what had taken place in Horeb. The well-known story, told first in *Exodus* xvii. and more fully in *Numbers* xx. relates how Moses, harassed by the murmuring of the

people, "desecrated" the miraculous deed of producing water from the rock, and showed that he was only an ordinary man after all, by giving way to hastiness of temper—"Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?"

88-89 O'er-importuned brows . . . gesture: on such a second occasion the prophet's command to the rock would be "clouded" by the memories of the discontent and chiding of his people; their dissatisfactions are thought of as troubling his brow. The very gesture of striking the rock would be performed in a mood of disgust or preoccupation with the past.

97 Sinai: see *Exodus*, xxiv. 29.

101 Jethro's daughter: Zipporah, whom Moses married. See *Exodus*, ii. 21-22.

102 *Aethiopian bondslave*: whom Moses also married. See *Numbers*, xii. 1.

120 Lines I write . . . last time: Professor De Vane points out that the metre of this poem—unrimed trochaic pentameters—is not used elsewhere in Browning's works, and this seems to be the correct interpretation of this line. Browning's main idea in this connection is, however, that developed in the next stanza (St. xiv.)

121 fresco: the change from fresco to the illumination of MSS. is not a complete change of art; but these are two very different forms of painting, and the transition is at least "a semblance of resource" like Browning's change from dramatic to personal poetry.

136 Norbert: one of the characters in Browning's *In a Balcony*, which was first published in *Men and Women*.

145 Here in London: the Brownings came to England in the summer of 1855 to see *Men and Women* through the press, and this poem was written during their stay in Dorset Street.

148 Fiesole: see note to *Andrea del Sarto*, l. 15 (p. 219).

150 Samminiato: the church of San Miniato stands on a hill S.E. of Florence.

160 the old sweet mythos: the myth of the love of Cynthia, the moon-goddess, for Endymion, a mortal shepherd-youth. The story is told by Keats (l. 165) in his *Endymion*. Homer also wrote a Hymn to Diana.

163 Zoroaster: (c. 500 B.C.), the reformer of the ancient Parsee religion. Light is for the Parsees the symbol of God; therefore they reverence the heavenly bodies. Zoroaster himself was also an astronomer.

164 Galileo: the great Italian astronomer (1564-1642), imprisoned by the Inquisition for teaching that the earth moved round the sun.

173 Seen by Moses: cf. *Exodus*, xxiv. 10.

174 Aaron, Nadab, Abihu: Aaron was the brother of Moses; and Nadab and Abihu were Aaron's sons. These, with seventy elders of the people, accompanied Moses and saw the vision of God upon the mountain. (Cf. *Exodus*, xxiv.)

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

SONGS FROM "JAMES LEE'S WIFE" (1864)

These two lyrics form part of a series of nine, put into the mouth of a woman who realizes that she has lost the love of her husband. Both songs are good examples of Browning's power of observation, and are full of colour and beauty. They are equally typical of his philosophy of life. *On the Cliff* shows the power of love; *Among the Rocks* is an illustration of the truth that love does not seek gain for itself, but for another.

V. ON THE CLIFF

16 barded and chanfroned : "bard," the breast-armour of a medieval war-horse, often fitted with iron spikes.

16 "chanfron": usually "chamfron" or "chamfrein," the frontlet of an armed horse.

17 quixote-mage: a blend of Don Quixote who represents chivalry, and the Magi, representing worship.

ABT VOGLER (1864)

A wonderful interpretation of the power of music and a notable reflection of Browning's attitude to life. The essential kinship of music and architecture is the basis of the likening of the Abbé's extemporization to a palace. To the building of this palace all the powers of the Universe contribute, and the music in its range and variety is a symbol of the meeting of Heaven and Hell, Past and Present, Time and Eternity; it is even in its very elements a symbol of the power of God, surpassing all the other arts in its ideal quality: out of three sounds comes not a fourth, but a "star."

But the figure of the palace recalls to us the fact that the beauty of music is transient, whereas that of architecture is, in a comparative degree, permanent. Yet this, the Abbé realizes, is not the whole truth. No form of beauty, good, or power, dies:

each survives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.

So for Abt Vogler, as for the Grammarian, our failure here is "but a triumph's evidence for the fulness of the days."

— Abt Vogler: George Joseph Vogler (1749-1814), usually known as the Abbé Vogler, was a noted organist and composer of the eighteenth century. He was born at Wurzburg, and educated for the Roman Catholic Church. He received his musical education at Bamberg and Mannheim, and after some years in the Papal household at Rome, he returned, in 1775, to Mannheim, where he founded a school of music. He was made chaplain and kapellmeister, and wrote several works on com-

position. He removed to Munich, and then to Paris, producing several operas without much success, and after further travel settled in Stockholm, where he founded a second school of music, and invented his "Orchestriion." This was "a very compact organ, in which five key-boards of five octaves each, and a pedal board of thirty-six keys with swell complete, were packed into a cube of nine feet." The Abbé gave performances on this organ in London in 1790, realizing £1200 and making his name as an organist. On his return to Germany he was received with great enthusiasm. His last school was at Darmstadt where Weber and Meyerbeer were among his devoted pupils.

3 when Solomon willed : the Jews had a tradition that Solomon had power over angels and demons, through knowledge of the ineffable Name of God (cf. l. 7) graven on a ring sent from heaven.

8 the princess he loved : Pharaoh's daughter. Cf. i *Kings*, vii. 8.

23 Rome's dome : the dome of St Peter's in Rome was illuminated for special festivals, and the lamps on the façade were lit by runners with lighted torches while the clock chimed the hour.

34 Protoplasm : the original model from which succeeding copies are derived.

52 out of three sounds . . . : the chord resulting from the harmony of three notes is more than a mere fourth sound. Its beauty is something unforeseen, and seems to belong to another order. The combination might be compared to the chemical combination of elements.

70 The evil is null . . . : we realize good by contrast with evil, and sound by contrast with silence.

72 On earth the broken arcs . . . : cf. the image employed in *A Grammarian's Funeral*, ll. 103-104.

77 The high that proved too high . . . : cf. *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, ll. 133-150, and *Andrea del Sarto*, ll. 97-99.

91 Common chord : the fundamental tone with its third and fifth, e.g. the combination of C E, and G.

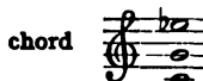
92-96 the minor . . . a ninth . . . : as is evident from the line "I blunt it into a ninth," he sinks to the minor, not from the common chord, but (as W. T. Young showed) from a transposed common chord. Thus the common chord



can be transposed to



By lowering the top note E a semi-tone, we have a minor common



and the further blunting
of this by a semi-tone
gives us a ninth :



whence we slide to the chord of C Major :
which is taken as symbolizing the ordinary
affairs of life.



RABBI BEN EZRA (1864)

This is one of the most beautiful and profound poems of the *Dramatis Personæ* volume, but it shows very clearly the changing character of Browning's art. The noble thought of this impassioned piece springs direct from the heart of the poet, but we miss—partly, perhaps, for this very reason—the dramatic power, the vivid characterization of the speaker. If the sentiments expressed in the poem accord with the teaching of the Rabbi—and Mr A. J. Campbell showed that they do—this is largely coincidence, or a correspondence of ideas sufficient to suggest the name of Rabbi Ben Ezra as the title of the poem. The ideas expressed have their counterpart in several others of Browning's poems, notably *Saul* and *Andrea del Sarto*.

— Rabbi Ben Ezra was a famous Jewish scholar born in 1092 at Toledo. He was learned in mathematics and astronomy as well as in divinity, and travelled widely, visiting Rome and England. He died at the island of Rhodes in 1167. His *Commentaries on the Old Testament* were long famous and are still of value.

7 Not that, amassing flowers . . . : before this line and l. 10 the reader must understand the "Do I remonstrate" of l. 15. Browning means: "I do not complain because Youth is always dissatisfied with the actual and longs for the ideal, thus annulling itself and having no joy either way. Rather, I prize these hopes, fears and doubts, which distinguish Man from the animal creation." The thought of this passage might be compared with that of Stanza ix. (ll. 145-164) of Wordsworth's *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality in Childhood*. Though the application of the idea is different, it seems that Browning's lines are an echo of the *Ode*.

39 Shall life succeed . . . : an inversion for "Life shall succeed . . ." The paradox formulated in this stanza is a favourite notion with Browning. Cf. *A Grammarian's Funeral*, l. 119; *Abt Vogler*, ll. 81-82.

43-45 What is he . . . : he whose soul only works to support physical needs is but a brute.

57 I, who saw power . . . : youth has the vision of the power and perfection of the Universe; age realizes how love also is all-pervading.

62 Our soul, in its rose-mesh : cf. *Epistle of Karshish*, ll. 3-6.

72 nor soul helps flesh : cf. *Fra Lippo Lippi*, ll. 205-208.

91 when evening shuts : the glory of sunset disappears suddenly—at a certain moment—and our mind begins to reflect

on the day ended. So age appears suddenly and we try to form a judgment on the acts of our life.

150 whose wheel the pitcher shaped: the wheel is Time and the clay the soul. The image of the Potter is taken from Scripture (cf. *Isaiah*, lxiv, and *Jeremiah*, xviii), but Browning has also in mind the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam. This is made clear by the direct reference in ll. 154-156. Such teaching as that of the Persian poet is foolish, says Browning, because it overlooks the fact of the immortality of the soul, and makes of the soul a mere counter in the play of circumstances which are in reality transient.

170-73 laughing loves . . . Scull things: at the base of the pitcher, i.e. at the beginning of life, are figures symbolising the enjoyments of youth; round its upper rim are grimmer images representing the trials and sorrows of age.

CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS (1864)

The outline conception of Caliban and his dam, and the name of Caliban's god Setebos, were derived from Shakespeare's *Tempest*. Browning doubtless had in mind, in particular, the words of Caliban concerning Prospero in Act I, Sc. ii. (ll. 372-4):

I must obey: his art is of such power
It would control my dam's god, Setebos,
And make a vassal of him.

and he seems to have considered his Caliban as identical with Shakespeare's, as seen at the opening of the play, for we find him writing to Dr Furnivall twenty years later:

As to the divergence from Shakespeare's Caliban—is it so decided? There is no "forgetfulness of his love for music," since he makes a song and sings it; nor of his "visions of Heaven," for he speculates on what goes on there; nor of his resolve to "learn wisdom and such grace," seeing that he falls flat and loveth Setebos, and was a fool to gibe at a Power he had miscalculated. (Letter of 25th April, 1884.)

It may also be noted that the vivid and forceful opening and close of Browning's poem are elaborations of hints found in *The Tempest*.

But it is obvious that Browning borrowed little more from Shakespeare than the general idea of this "savage and deformed slave" and his surroundings. The religious speculations which he puts into the mouth of Caliban, and which form the main substance of the poem, have no counterpart in *The Tempest*.

The poem is closely related to the thought of the period. The development of natural science in the 18th and 19th centuries encouraged attempts to reason about the nature of God on the evidence provided by natural phenomena and scientific laws.

Best known of early 19th-century writings on this subject were the *Bridgewater Treatises* (1833-40) "On the Power, Wisdom and Goodness of God, as manifested in the Creation," treatises with which Browning was familiar. At the time *Caliban upon Setebos* was written (probably 1862-3), widespread interest was also being taken in the theory of Evolution. This theory had recently been more sharply defined in Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), and hopes were freely entertained—and in religious circles vehemently decried—of finding the "missing link" between man and lower forms of creation. It may be that the poem sprang from the uniting in Browning's mind of the conception of primitive man with the notion of discovering God through reason and the study of natural laws.

Browning did not question the reasonableness of the modern scientific view of the natural universe; but he stoutly challenged some of the religious speculations founded upon it, and *Caliban upon Setebos* is an attempt to show the limitations of a religion based upon an anthropomorphic conception of the Deity. The poem is not intended to be a philosophic survey of "natural theology." Browning's object is satirical; by presenting such a religion as realised by a half-human savage he gives a partial and grotesque view of the subject.

Setebos is a god created out of the fears, envy, malice, cruelty and idleness of Caliban himself; he is endowed with Caliban's own qualities and imagined as treating the world as Caliban treats the creatures within his power. Setebos is conceived as purely capricious (ll. 90-91), unconcerned with right or wrong (l. 98), feeling no emotion, but possessing strength (l. 99), and delighting in a sense of power over the things of his creation (l. 115). The creatures of the earth are in some ways finer than Setebos and are the objects of his envy (ll. 111-13), but in the main they are weaker. Setebos made them weak so that he might vex them (l. 172) and so that they might be objects of his sport or of the exercise of his powers (ll. 177, 185-99).

The religion founded on such a conception of deity is dark and fatalistic:—

Here we are,
And there is He, and nowhere help at all (ll. 248-49).

The only hope for Caliban and the world is that Setebos may change, or perhaps be transformed (ll. 241-49) into that higher power which Caliban calls the "Quiet." The Quiet rules over Setebos as Setebos himself rules Caliban; it dwells beyond the stars, far beyond the thought or care of Caliban; it is a power feeling neither joy nor grief and therefore free from the weakness, envy and restlessness of Setebos (ll. 129-41.)

This Quiet, all it hath a mind to, doth (l. 137).

The conception of the Quiet is doubtless beyond the capacity

of a savage such as Caliban ; but it is typical of the subtlety of Browning's thought that he makes Caliban consider Setebos subordinate to this higher power : even the savage is unsatisfied with his "natural theology" and looks beyond for some supernatural and unknown divinity.

This brings us to the centre of Browning's thought. By this grotesque satire of religious belief the poet intends to show the need for a revealed religion and for faith in a God characterized by love as well as by intelligence and power. In its insistence on this central Christian doctrine of the love of God for His creatures, the poem is closely linked in thought with *Saul* and *An Epistle of Karshish*. (See Introduction, pp. xxx.-xxxii.)

When Browning was asked in 1885 to choose from his works "four poems of moderate length, which represented their writer fairly," he selected *Caliban upon Setebos* as representative of his dramatic poems (Letter to Gosse, 15th March, 1885). The choice was a good one : the poem is a masterpiece of originality and of dramatic power. The supple blank verse in which it is written is admirably adapted to the mingling of description and speculation which make up its substance. The poem is full of colour and movement ; both the figure of Caliban and the natural features of Prospero's island are vividly portrayed ; and the character of Setebos is forcibly brought home to us in the series of illustrations drawn from Caliban's own experience. The references to birds and animals, especially in ll. 44-55, 157-67 and 226-31 are interesting as showing (like such poems as *Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis* and *The Englishman in Italy*) Browning's close observation of, and imaginative sympathy with, living things.

—“Thou thoughtest . . .” : *Psalm 50 v. 21.*

1 'Will sprawl : Caliban speaks for the most part in the third person. Perhaps the poet intends to suggest by this device the undeveloped or childish nature of Caliban's thinking ; or perhaps, and more probably, Caliban, who is hiding from Setebos, imagines that he can in this way deceive the god and escape punishment for his opinions.

7 pompon-plant : “Pompion,” originally “pompon,” is an earlier form of “pumpkin.”

16 his dam : Sycorax. (Shakespeare : *Tempest*, I. ii. 258.)

27 But not the stars : The explanation of this is given in the account of the Quiet in ll. 132-41.

47 auk : the guillemot or puffin, a bird living on the shores of the northern oceans.

50 pie : not the magpie, but the woodpie or woodpecker, which pecks out insects from the bark of trees. The reference to ants in l. 53 is, however, curious ; naturalists tell us that all woodpeckers eat ants.

51 oakwarts : now more commonly called "oak-galls" or "oak-apples."

67 It nothing skills : the partial superiority of these creatures is of no avail against the power of Setebos if he turns from admiring them to mocking and plaguing them.

72 maggots scamper : Caliban's explanation of drunkenness.

79 hoopoe : a crested bird allied to the hornbill and found in the Mediterranean.

83 grigs : grasshoppers or crickets.

103 just choosing so : this is, no doubt, a satiric reference, as Dr Berdoe suggested, to the Calvinist doctrine of election or pre-destination. Cf. Calvin: *Institutes*: "God has pre-destinated some to eternal life, while the rest of mankind are predestinated to condemnation and eternal death."

111-12 rougher than His handiwork . . . things worthier than Himself : this idea is based on Caliban's perception that the creatures of nature are in some respects finer than man. He has seen, too, that man can achieve, by the aid of natural objects, some things which are beyond his own unaided skill. But his consolation, like that of Setebos, is that such objects are powerless without the control of the superior agent. More than that, as is shown in ll. 170 *et seq.*, they are subject by their weakness to the power of god or man to torment them.

132 something quiet : the Quiet is apparently of Browning's own invention. The conception recalls the words of Cleon, in Browning's poem of that title: Cleon thinks of Zeus as dwelling "Within the eventual element of calm."

142 many-handed as a cuttlefish : all forms of cuttlefish have five pairs of arms circling the mouth, one serving to capture prey and the others acting as suckers. Caliban uses the image not to suggest that Setebos is grotesque in form, but rather to indicate his resourcefulness and the fact that there is no escaping him.

156 oncelot : a young ounce or lynx.

163 sea-beast : probably some form of seal or walrus is intended.

177 orc : strictly, a kind of whale; but in the 17th century the word was used vaguely to denote any ferocious sea-monster, and Browning may be so using it here.

196 sloth : a mammal living in trees in Central and South America; but the term is also used (as here?) to denote other slow-moving animals of the bear family.

209 Gaped as a snake : compare with this image the picture of the hills in Stanza xxx. of *Childe Roland*.

216 Please Him and hinder this? : i.e. "Ought I to learn how to please him, as Prospero does, so that he will no longer have a spite against me? No doubt! But Setebos will not reveal how he may be pleased: you find this by chance—or, more probably, not at all!"

229 urchin : used in its archaic sense of "hedgehog."

250 with the life, the pain shall stop : Caliban's philosophy denies the immortality of the soul. This part of the poem thus stands in direct contrast to *Rabbi Ben Ezra* and *Prospice*. Line 255 invites comparison and contrast with *Prospice* ll. 13-22.

276 What I hate : Caliban's song appears intentionally cryptic, or else is to be considered an illogical parody of the utterances of Prospero. The objects of his sacrifice are not "hated" by Caliban. "No mate For Thee" would only seem to make sense if related to the words that follow : "what see for envy, etc."

286 His raven : the raven has long been popularly regarded as a bird of ill omen ; so it is fitting that Caliban should look on it as spying on behalf of Setebos.

PROSPICE (1864)

Mrs Browning died on June 29th, 1861, and *Prospice* was written in the autumn of the same year. The poem, is, therefore, no mere academic expression of belief in immortality, but a courageous declaration of faith, written in the shadow of great sorrow. The fighting spirit which inspired the poem, and the belief in the immortality of love and the reunion of individual souls, are both characteristic of Browning.

— Prospice : "look forward."

A FACE (1864)

A marvellous translation into words of the effects of painting. The poem may be termed "purely descriptive," yet it is descriptive poetry so filled with the passion of beauty as to become lyrical.

The profile described is that of Emily Patmore, wife of the poet Coventry Patmore.

3 the Tuscan's early art : the early painters of Tuscany, the province in which Florence is situated, followed the practice of painting portraits against a complete gold background. This tradition they inherited from the Byzantine school.

14 Correggio : (1494-1534), a great Italian painter who did most of his work at Parma. He loved the practice of massing the faces of cherubim in his religious pictures.

FROM "THE RING AND THE BOOK" (1868-69)

O LYRIC LOVE

The Ring and the Book was the great work of the years following Mrs Browning's death, and was written in the spirit of a tribute to her memory. These lines, which form the Dedication, are found at the conclusion of Book I. They contain a graceful appreciation of Mrs Browning's poetry, which Browning esteemed as of greater value than his own. One naturally compares the spirit of this invocation with Milton's invocation of the Heavenly Muse in *Paradise Lost*, Book I., 1-26, and VII., 1-39.

PACCHIAROTTO, AND HOW HE WORKED IN
DISTEMPER

HOUSE (1876)

A symbolic poem in Browning's best vein of delightful and rather grotesque humour. It illustrates how strong was the dramatic instinct in Browning, even in these later years when his dramatic studies had not the objective vitality of his earlier monologues. This poem is a comment on his preference for speaking in the persons, and through the mouths, of others, expressing many of his best thoughts in the speech of unworthy persons, and keeping the house of his own mind private from public curiosity. You may only know him by the spirit-sense, by study of his works and intuition of his deeper meaning (Stanza ix.)—"No optics like yours," he adds bluntly to his British public.

38 With this same key . . . : a quotation from Wordsworth's *Sonnet on the Sonnet*. Browning, unlike most English poets and critics, did not believe Shakespeare's Sonnets to be autobiographical. To the last line of this stanza of Browning, Swinburne, for example, replied: "No, not the less Shakespeare, but the less Browning he."

HERVÉ RIEL

(The *Cornhill Magazine*, March, 1871)

This is perhaps the finest of Browning's purely narrative poems, and the variety gained by the use of this supple "ode" form enables the poet to give a hearty and straightforward expression of the story.

Browning gave the £100 he received from the *Cornhill* for this poem to the relief of the French sufferers from the siege of Paris.

The incident described in the poem is told in guide-books of Croisic in Brittany, where Browning stayed in the summer of 1866 and in September 1867, when the poem was written. The facts of the story had been forgotten by the public and were denied at St Malo ; but their truth was established from the records of the French Admiralty in Paris.

The story has reference to the War of the English Succession, 1689-97. When William of Orange ascended the English throne, Louis XIV. of France made war on England and Holland, with the object of restoring James II. In the battle of La Hogue, 1692, the French fleet was defeated, and drew off towards St Malo with the English fleet in pursuit. When the pilots and commanders despaired of escape, because they dared not steer their ships through the shallows into the shelter of the mouth of the Rance, a simple Breton sailor offered to pilot the fleet safely, through channels which had been thought impassable, into the mouth of the river. The poem reaches a dramatic climax, such as Browning was fond of, in Stanza x., and the last stanza gives some comments, very typical of the poet, upon the whole matter.

1 the Hogue : the cape on the coast of Normandy, west of Cherbourg. Off this headland the battle took place.

5 St Malo : the most important sea-port of Brittany, situated at the mouth of the river Rance.

8 Damfreville : Commander of the fleeing French squadron.

43 Tourville : (1642-1701), Admiral of the French fleet.

44 Croisickese : an inhabitant of Croisic.

46 Malouins : inhabitants of St Malo.

49 Grève : beach. The stretch of sands between St Malo and Mont St Michel is called "La Grève."

49 Disembogues : discharges itself into the sea.

53 Solidor : a naval fort at the mouth of the Rance.

123 A good whole holiday : according to the Croisic version, the sailor asked to be discharged—a small enough reward. Browning further increases the dramatic incongruity by reducing this to a day's holiday.

124 Belle Aurore : beautiful Dawn. Perhaps he called her after a common ship's name.

132 bore the bell : came off victor. The image is taken from the bell worn by the leading cow or sheep of the drove or flock.

135 Louvre : in Paris ; formerly a Royal palace ; now the most famous Museum and Art Gallery in Europe.

DRAMATIC IDYLLS (FIRST SERIES) 1879

PHEIDIPIPPIDES

Another splendid piece of narrative, which has the further merit of conveying through the lips of the hero, a wonderfully detailed picture of Athenian life and history. As a narrative the poem may be compared and contrasted with *Hervé Riel*. It is characterized by a similar dramatic ending: as Hervé Riel's reward is entirely disproportionate to his services, so the valorous runner has "release from the racer's toil," not in the obvious sense of repose, but in death at the moment of his triumph.

The story of Pheidippides is told by Herodotus (vi. 105), and the time referred to is that of the Persian expedition against Greece in the time of Darius. Though the Spartans refused their aid, the Athenian armies, under Miltiades, defeated the invaders at the battle of Marathon in 490 B.C. (Cf. ll. 13, 105.)

—*χαίρετε, νικῶμεν*: rejoice, we conquer.

2 dæmons: the tutelary spirits which guarded the family or individual.

4 Her of the ægis and spear: Pallas Athene or Minerva, goddess of wisdom and of warfare. ægis, a shield.

5 ye of the bow and buskin: Apollo, god of the sun; and Artemis or Diana, goddess of the moon and of hunting.

8 Pan: in form half-man, half-goat. Pan was the god of flocks and pastures. He was supposed to have aided Athens at the battle of Marathon, by appearing amongst the Persians and terrorizing them. Hence, "panic."

9 Archons: the nine rulers or magistrates by whom Athens was governed.

9 tettix: the grasshopper, supposed to have sprung from the ground. The Athenians wore a golden grasshopper as their badge to indicate their right, as descendants of earth-born owners, to their lands.

12 Sparta: or Lacedæmon; nearly 140 miles from Athens.

18 water and earth: symbolizing submission to the invaders: a Persian custom.

19 Eretria: a city N. of Athens on the island of Eubœa.

31 Athene: Pallas Athene. (Cf. note to l. 4.)

32 Phoibos: Phœbus Apollo, the sun-god.

32 Artemis: Diana, the moon-goddess.

33 Olumpos: the home of the gods.

37 that precept of old: the Spartans were noted for delaying action by reference to omens.

47 filleted victim: the animal to be sacrificed was adorned with bands of ribbon.

52 Parnes: the mountains W. of Athens. According to Herodotus, Pan appeared to Pheidippides on Mount Parthenium.

62 Erebos: the region of darkness between Earth and Hades.

83 **Fennel**: the Greek for "fennel" is "marathon": the herb thus "foreshadowed the place" of the battle.

87 **on the razor's edge**: in a precarious position. A translation of the Greek " $\epsilon\pi\iota\zeta\nu\rho\nu\alpha\kappa\mu\gamma\varsigma$ ".

89 **Miltiades**: tyrant of the Chersonese on the Hellespont. He was driven back to Athens by the invading Persians and was appointed commander of the Greek army.

106 **Akropolis**: the citadel of Athens.

113 **The word of salute** . . . : the imperative " $\chiαιρε$ " was a common form of greeting at meeting or parting (from " $\chiαιρω$," to rejoice.)

FERISHTAH'S FANCIES (1884)

EPILOGUE

The volume of which this poem is the epilogue contains a series of semi-dramatic discussions, in which the chief speaker is an imaginary Persian poet, but which are in reality expressions of some of Browning's chief religious and philosophical beliefs. Each of these poems is followed by a love-lyric of which the theme is suggested by the preceding discussion or parable. The *Epilogue* stands both as the climax of this series of very characteristic lyrics, and as a direct comment by the poet on the thought of the volume, the whole design of which, as Dowden says, "implies that there is a correspondency between the truths of religion and the truths of the passion of love between man and woman."

Browning's use, in the first stanza, of the moon-symbolism—imagery which links the poem with *One Word More*—suggests that this epilogue is addressed to the spirit of the poet's dead wife. The central stanzas, which are often quoted apart from the rest, are related in thought and mood with *Prosipe* and the *Epilogue to Asolando*: life is regarded as a struggle in which the individual must strive towards victory and perfection; this is the individual's contribution to that larger strife in which the whole of humanity—and perhaps of nature—is engaged, the issue of which lies in the hands of God.

The last stanza casts a sudden doubt on the religious faith expressed in the preceding part of the poem. The poet asks "What if this heroic view of life has no justification? What if this 'optimism' is simply a reflection in my mind of the human love that has surrounded me?" But this doubt is only momentary; for human love is itself an adequate foundation of faith and a basis for a philosophy of life.

ASOLANDO (1889)

EPILOGUE

The volume entitled *Asolando* was Browning's last volume of poems, and was published in London on the day of his death in Venice, December 12th, 1889. This *Epilogue*, with its joy in the battle of life, its ringing courage, and its faith in the ultimate triumph of right, is a fitting close to his life's work.

QUESTIONS

1. Tell the story either of *An Epistle of Karshish*, or of *The Statue and the Bust*, adding comments on Browning's presentation of the story and on its significance.
2. What do we learn of the characters of the speakers in the following poems: *My Last Duchess*, *The Bishop orders his Tomb at St Praxed's Church*, *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister*?
3. Show what qualities of Browning's poetry are illustrated in any two of the following: *Childe Roland*, *The Bishop orders his Tomb at St Praxed's Church*, *Holy-Cross Day*.
4. By what means does Browning achieve in *How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix* a vivid sense of the scene of the poem?
5. Work out in detail the symbolism of *Love in a Life*, or of *Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha*.
6. Give a logical summary of the teaching of *Rabbi Ben Ezra*.
7. Examine Browning's use of "local colour" in *Saul*.
8. What do we learn from *Andrea del Sarto* of the character of the artist's wife?
9. "There was a certain timidity of mind, a sort of diffidence and want of force in his nature. . . ." How is this view of the character of Andrea del Sarto borne out in the poem?
10. Summarize the views of art expressed by *Fra Lippo Lippi* and by his opponents.
11. Examine and illustrate Browning's use of imagery and symbolism in *One Word More*.
12. Compare the views of life expressed in *Abt Vogler* and in *Rabbi Ben Ezra*.
13. "Browning is the poet of aspiration and faith." Illustrate.
14. By what criteria does Browning judge human character? Give examples.
15. Illustrate Browning's use of Nature, or compare him as a nature-poet with any other poet of the nineteenth century.
16. What do you gather from the poems you have studied of Browning's religious views?
17. Indicate, by reference to the poems concerned, Browning's conception of the purpose of either painting or music.
18. In what poems, and in what manner, does Browning declare his belief in immortality?
19. Illustrate Browning's courage, his optimism, his energy.
20. Browning as a lyric poet.

21. Compare Browning's method in lyrical poetry with that of any other English poet with whose lyrics you are familiar.
22. Why does the term "dramatic" occur so frequently in the titles to Browning's volumes? How far do you consider the term appropriate to the poems?
23. Illustrate Browning's power of scene-painting and show what part the scene plays in the poems.
24. Browning as a narrative poet.
25. Compare *Hervé Riel* in method and spirit with *Pheidippides*.
26. How far are Browning's dramatic monologues truly dramatic, and how far does the poet express his own ideas and beliefs in them?
27. Comment on and illustrate Browning's power of verse-music.
28. Browning's use of rime.
29. Examine the variety of the stanza-forms used by Browning: what opinions do you form on the value of these different forms in the poems selected?
30. Illustrate and discuss: (a) Browning's obscurity; (b) his use of grotesque rimes; (c) his skill in onomatopœia.
31. Browning's diction, with special reference to (a) his coinages; (b) his use of uncommon words; (c) the "Anglo-Saxon" or "native" element in his diction.
32. Browning's use of Biblical imagery.
33. Examine Browning's imagery with regard to its "poetic" quality.
34. In what relation does Browning stand to the poets of the Romantic period and to those of his own day?
35. How far is Browning representative of the age in which he lived?
36. Compare Browning as artist and as thinker with Tennyson, Arnold, or Morris.

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